LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE OBJECTIVE

SQUADRON

A Developmental Study

Presented To

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by

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Contents

Illustrations

Preface

The unifying force of this research group was a deep concern over the status of leadership in Air Force combat squadrons. Though some of the research findings are not very pleasant, we hope our recommendations prompt open and constructive dialog and leave the reader with an optimistic view of the future of Air Force leadership development.

We owe a great debt to the many officers who contributed their time and ideas to this project. First, we thank the 73 current and former squadron commanders, operations officers, and maintenance officers who participated in our opinion survey. Their frank comments provided the core findings in this report and pointed the way toward many of the recommendations. From the Air War College, we thank Lt Col Peter O'Neill, Lt Col Gail Duke, Lt Col Mark Rogers, and Lt Col Thomas Poulos, Jr., for their patient and insightful participation in our leadership forums. From the Air Command and Staff College, we also thank Maj David Kelly, USMC, Sqn Ldr David Bye, RAF, Maj Jess Scarbrough, USA, and Maj Dennis Daley. Finally, we acknowledge the valuable guidance provided by Col Mark Richardson and our faculty research advisor, Maj Bret Rider.

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Abstract

The 1991 Air Force reorganization instituted the objective squadron, placing flightline maintenance under command of the flying squadron commander. This research identifies and validates a paradoxical combination of effects within the new squadrons. While most combat-deployable flying squadrons are more mission capable, a majority of their commanders do not feel prepared to lead them. A brief history of flying squadron organization from 1947 to the present provides the requisite background to understand the problems and benefits of the objective squadron. Building on this background, a literature search, nine leadership forums, and an opinion survey form the core of the research effort. The literature search into leadership development motivated the formulation of a matrix of leadership traits and an applied leadership model to assess the research findings and recommendations. The leadership forums and opinion survey produced results in four key areas which validate the objective squadron paradox and related leadership development problems. To improve leadership development within the objective squadron, this paper makes seven recommendations which fall into individual and institutional categories. Any officer can employ the individual recommendations while the institutional recommendations require high-level Air Force implementation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Thesis

In 1991, the US Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen Merrill A. McPeak, reorganized all flying squadrons as part of an Air Force wide reorganization. In the newly formed "objective" squadron, the squadron commander retained his previous command of flying operations, but gained command of flightline maintenance. General McPeak instituted the change primarily to enable squadrons to deploy and fight with the same organizational structure they have during peacetime training.

The objective squadron has experienced a remarkable and seemingly contradictory combination of results. This research indicates that although squadron commanders feel the combat effectiveness and deployability of flying squadrons has improved, they did not feel prepared to lead in a *majority* of instances. Deficient commander preparation, both in experience and academically, also adversely affects maintenance supervision in the objective squadron.

Despite the apparent benefits of the objective squadron, the Air Force falls well short of its usual standards in leadership development of its rated officers and squadron commanders. The problem has been evolving ever since the first trends toward

centralized maintenance began in the mid-1950s. The objective squadron has merely shifted the problem from a less visible one encountered at the senior leadership level to a more visible one encountered at the squadron level. Assuming command of a flying squadron with 15 to 17 years of service, an officer would appear to have plenty of time to prepare, yet such preparation is eluding the Air Force.

Significance

The unprepared squadron commander faces a sink-or-swim, on-the-job training program the day he assumes command. For the commander who learns the job quickly enough, the benefits of successful command are considerable, both to the squadron and to his *future* leadership ability. Meanwhile, the Air Force sacrifices some measure of combat capability in those squadrons with ineffective commanders and in those squadrons whose commanders will eventually become effective, but are still busy learning the job.

As implied by the sink-or-swim analogy above, this research has discovered that there exists a widespread test mentality about squadron commandership in the Air Force today, especially in the senior leadership. Remarking on the objective squadron, a retired senior Air Force leader stated in an address to the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) student body, "We have created a system in which you can fail."[1]

In an environment of decreasing budgets and a smaller Air Force with fewer flying squadrons than any time since before World War II, the Air Force cannot afford to gamble with its squadron commanders to see if they will pass or fail. When an officer assumes a position as important as squadron commander, there should be no doubt about

his preparation or whether he will do well. The squadron commander should certainly be challenged, but the only real question should be whether the officer will be a *good* commander or a *spectacular* commander.

Assumptions and Scope

The 1991 restructure was the deepest and broadest reorganization since the founding of the Air Force as a separate service. General Fogleman, the subsequent Air Force Chief of Staff (CSAF), recognized this fact and made it an Air Force goal to "stabilize, then figure out where to go."[2] After five years of experience under the objective wing and squadron structure, this research examines flying squadron organization and leadership to determine benefits, identify problems, and recommend solutions.

Two important assumptions underlie this research. First, this research and its recommendations apply primarily to combat-deployable flying squadrons. These squadrons experienced the greatest immediate benefit of the objective wing restructure. Although the objective structure may also benefit non-deployable flying squadrons, the benefits were not as immediately apparent since such squadrons already operated in combat as they do in training. Second, this research assumes the potential benefits of the objective squadron have been worth any inherent trouble and cost. For example, because the objective squadron decentralizes aircraft maintenance, there may be an increase in costs due to lost economies of scale. Such issues are beyond the scope of this research, and the research in no way argues that the Air Force should revert to the previous organizational structure.

The scope of this research lies in two areas. The first area is squadron- and wing-level organization. The group studied the development of Air Force squadron and wing organization to build the historical context for the objective squadron. Additionally, the group studied squadron-equivalent organizations in other branches of the US military and the militaries of other nations. The organizational research sought to understand working relationships between operations and maintenance, typical career paths leading to command, and leadership development within each organization.

The second topical area of this research is leadership development in the context of objective squadron command. The research examines leadership traits and behaviors necessary for effective command, and examines education, training, and practical experience as the primary components of leadership development. Leadership development relates back to organizational structure. An officer gains practical leadership experience from the pattern of jobs and responsibilities he holds within the squadron. A pioneering researcher of Air Force organization, Lt Col Gary Sheets, stated that "air employment doctrine is intertwined with that of organizational principles, policies, and objectives."[3] This statement applies no less to leadership development.

This research does not address the assessment of leadership preparation, the command selection process, or the evaluation of command effectiveness, nor does it address how an evaluation of command effectiveness could improve the leadership development process examined here.[4]

Approach

This research used three approaches to define, validate, and solve the leadership development problem. The first approach was a broad literature search into leadership and squadron organization as described by the research scope. The second approach was a series of nine leadership forums, each with one or two guest speakers, to examine US and foreign squadron organizations and leadership development. The third approach was an opinion survey conducted with 73 current and former US Air Force squadron commanders, operations officers, and maintenance officers from nearly every major weapons system.

Chapter two presents the organizational background of the US Air Force since 1947, highlighting the leadership development problems posed by the objective squadron. Using this background as the starting point, chapter three describes the research methodology employed to further identify both problems and benefits and discover solutions. Chapter four consolidates the key findings in the leadership development literature search into an applied leadership model. This model serves as the primary tool to assess problems and evaluate recommendations.

Chapters five, six, and seven are the core of this paper. Chapter five presents and discusses the results of the opinion survey. The results do not speak well for the state of leadership development in the objective squadron. Chapters six and seven present and discuss the research recommendations to solve leadership development problems. Recommendations come from all three approaches employed in examining the subject. The recommendations in chapter six are measures individual officers can immediately employ to improve leadership development in their squadron. Chapter seven describes

systemic recommendations which institutionalize improved leadership development and rely on high-level implementation. Chapter eight concludes the paper with a brief examination of the costs of leadership development.

Notes

[1] Senior officers address the ACSC student body on a nonattribution basis.

[2] Gen Ronald R. Fogleman, chief of staff, US Air Force, address to the general officers' call, Offutt AFB, Nebr., 8 December 1994.

[3] Lt Col Gary D. Sheets, "A History of Wing-Base Organization and Considerations for Change," Report no. 474 (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1978), 2.

[4] Ibid., 1. For an additional view of the need for organizational feedback, see also Lt Col Walter L. Burns, "The Objective Wing: A Critical Analysis," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1995), 35.

Chapter 2

History of Flying Squadron Organization

The Pre-Objective Wing: Organizations from 1947 to 1991

From the time the Air Force became a separate service in 1947 until the 1991 objective wing restructure, the Air Force experimented with a variety of organizational structures, many of which were driven by economic concerns rather than by mission effectiveness. Maintenance structure was consistently in the fray as the fledgling service attempted to find the most efficient and effective way to maintain its increasingly sophisticated combat aircraft.[1]

The air wing structure delineated in the 1948 first edition of Air Force Regulation (AFR) 20-15, *Organization Principles and Policies for the US Air Force*, is amazingly similar to the objective wing structure of 1991, but it took the Air Force several evolutionary iterations to return to its original shape. AFR 20-15 organized the combat wing into four groups: combat, maintenance and supply, air base, and medical. The combat group housed individual combat squadrons which were responsible for aircraft, airmen, and flying the mission. Flying the mission included flightline maintenance functions such as preflight, inspections, and periodic minor maintenance performed by maintenance personnel within the individual flying squadrons.[2] The maintenance and

supply group consisted of a supply squadron, a motor vehicle squadron, and a consolidated maintenance squadron for small parts fabrication, component repair, and minor aircraft structural repair. The air base group was responsible for all base support activities except medical support, which was provided by the medical group.

Aircraft maintenance functions were thus split between the combat group and the maintenance and supply group. This system of split maintenance allowed the combat squadron to possess the maintenance resources required to launch its aircraft and conduct daily servicing, giving each squadron maximum flexibility and independence. At the same time, the centralized maintenance squadron consolidated the more complex (and less frequent) maintenance functions that required specialized technicians and equipment. The result delicately balanced the efficiency of centralization and the effectiveness of individualized maintenance capability.

During the Air Force's first decade, the major commands developed a number of organizational structures as shrinking defense budgets led to the search for more cost-efficient operations.[3] At various times, Air Force Headquarters directed service-wide implementation of certain organizational structures, but it never took long for the field units and major commands to continue to evolve structures to meet their specific needs. The remainder of this section highlights the organizational themes pertinent to this paper.

During the mid-1950s, Strategic Air Command (SAC) pioneered the dual-deputy structure.[4] It featured a deputy commander for operations (DO) and a deputy commander for maintenance (DCM) under the wing commander, while maintaining separate support and medical groups. This structure removed flightline maintenance from the individual squadrons and consolidated it into an organizational maintenance squadron (OMS) under

the DCM who was responsible for *all* aircraft maintenance.[5] This was the first time that combat squadrons had no organic maintenance capability.

Air Force Manual (AFM) 66-1, *Maintenance Management*, published in 1956, set the stage for the demise of maintenance in the flying squadrons. Budget cuts and the resulting shortages of manpower and spare parts made consolidated maintenance very attractive. SAC's test of the consolidated maintenance structure was so successful that in 1958, compliance with AFM 66-1 became mandatory.[6] While this structure saved manpower and worked well during home station operations, squadron deployments caused serious problems. Since the maintenance resources required to launch the fleet were no longer part of the flying squadron, they had to be taken from the OMS and put back in the flying squadron prior to every deployment.

The Vietnam era saw numerous squadron deployments—with an extensive shuffle before each to ensure the required maintenance troops were included.[7] Starting in 1966, Tactical Air Command (TAC) began to put flightline maintenance personnel from the OMS back into the flying squadrons. In 1968, TAC published TACM 66-31 (title unknown) which formally organized flightline maintenance within the flying squadrons. Although this structure improved performance and eased transitions during deployments, in 1972, driven by budgetary considerations and the Vietnam drawdown, US Air Force Headquarters withdrew its approval for TAC's structural deviation and forced TAC to revert to the consolidated maintenance concept.[8]

In the mid-1970s, US Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) tested a tri-deputy wing organization that added a deputy commander for resources (DCR—later, resource management or RM) to the dual-deputy structure. The DCR was responsible for supply,

transportation, contracting, and accounting and finance. Viewed as giving the wing commander more direct control over the mission as well as focusing more attention on resource management during a period of serious budget constraints, the Air Force approved the tri-deputy system for all major commands in 1975.[9]

While maintenance remained consolidated under the DCM in the official tri-deputy structure, TAC reorganized the DCM internally into its Production Oriented Maintenance Organization (POMO) in 1975.[10] An aircraft generation squadron (AGS) under the DCM was responsible for all flightline maintenance, with a specific aircraft maintenance unit (AMU) assigned to each fighter squadron. Each AMU trained and deployed with its fighter squadron but reported to the AGS commander. Intermediate level maintenance was divided between a component repair squadron (CRS) and an equipment maintenance squadron (EMS), both of which also reported to the DCM. The structure was approved in AFM 66-5, *Production Oriented Maintenance Organization*, and POMO was eventually renamed COMO (Combat Oriented Maintenance Organization). This was the basic structure of the tactical air forces (TAC, USAFE, and Pacific Air Forces) when the objective wing structure was developed (Figure 1).

SAC and Military Airlift Command (MAC) kept their aircraft maintenance in the structure outlined in AFM 66-1, with flightline maintenance consolidated in an OMS. This was an efficient structure for them since they operated primarily from home station or relied on en route maintenance teams at established overseas locations when on the road. Squadron deployments were not routine, so the additional cost of separate AMUs was not worthwhile.
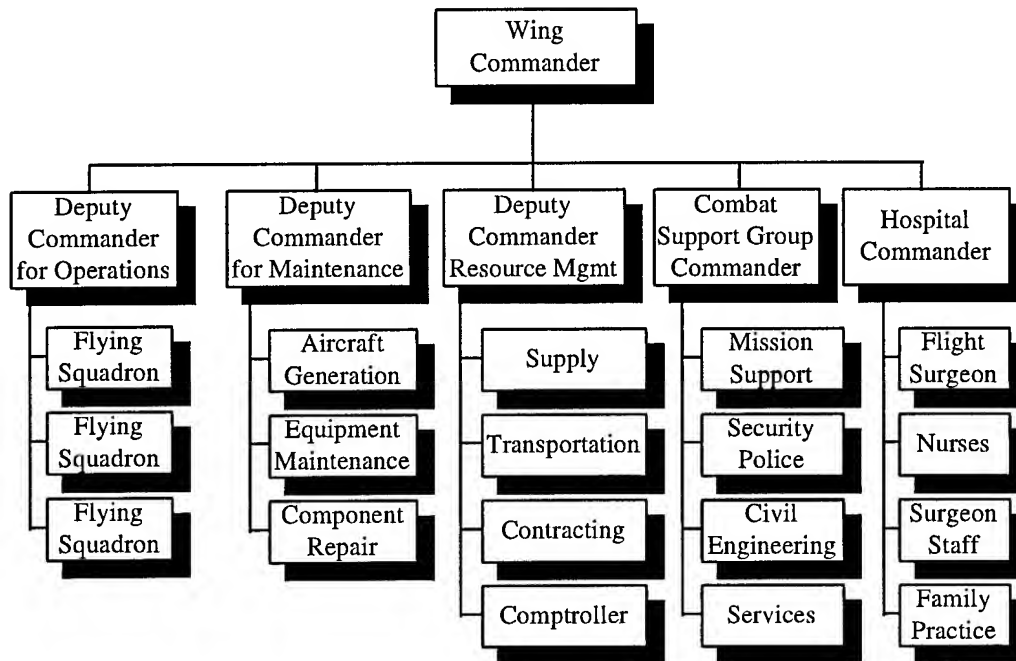
Figure 1. AFM 66-5 Tri-Deputy Wing Organization

The Objective Wing Structure

The objective wing structure was first briefed to Air Force senior leadership at the Corona South Conference in February 1991 as a wing-level organization think piece.[11] The briefing focused on tactical fighter wings in general and fighter wing logistics in particular. It offered an alternative philosophy that focused on teams that produce and effective support to those teams. It discussed organizing for combat, replacing functional perspectives with command responsibilities, delayering, streamlining, and economizing. The main issue was the discrepancy between the wartime (or deployment) and peacetime structures for the tactical fighter squadron and its associated AMU. The normal, peacetime structure of this fighting unit involved two separate squadrons reporting to two different groups. During a deployment, these two were matrixed into an integrated fighting force.[12]

11

As a proposed fix to the matrixing issue, on-equipment maintenance was combined with the fighter squadron to create a single, integrated squadron which was the primary fighting unit—the warfighters for which a wing exists. Other wing units were grouped as either direct support to the warfighter (the logistics group) or as indirect or base support (the support group).[13]
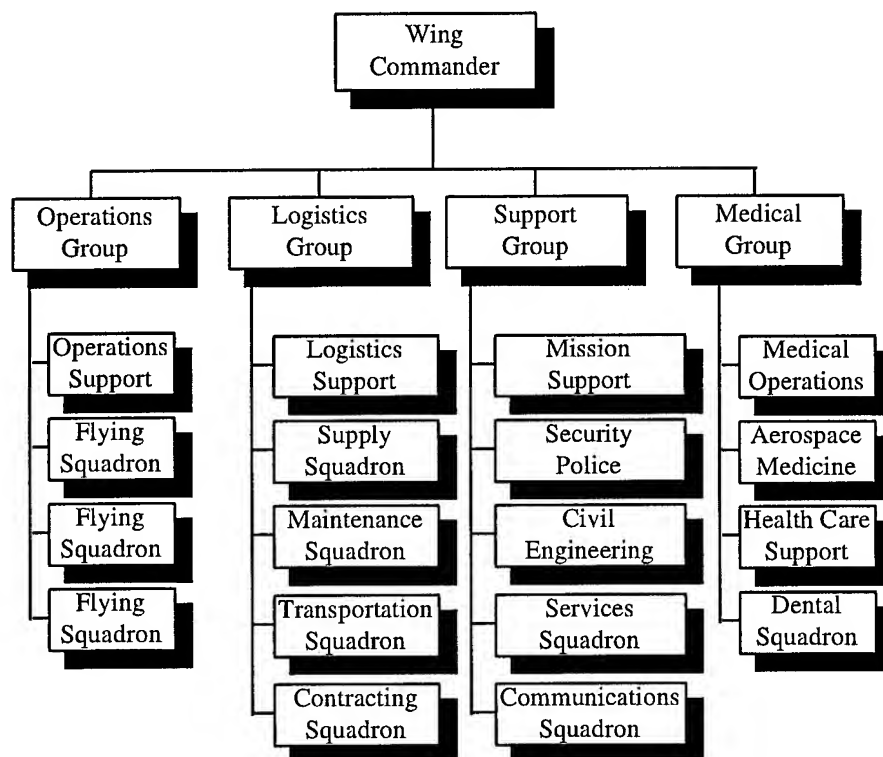
Figure 2. The AFI 38-101 Objective Wing Structure

Set out as a concept to be tested in the spring of 1991, by June of that year the entire Air Force was implementing the objective wing structure.[14] In the absence of formal guidance later published as Air Force Instruction (AFI) 38-101, *Air Force Organization*, many wings reorganized using copies of the slides from the Corona conference.

The restructure began by pulling the AMUs from the aircraft generation squadron and putting the on-equipment maintainers into the fighter squadrons. The AMU chief became the squadron maintenance officer (SMO) and the AMU became the sortie

generation flight. The aircraft generation squadron further divided up shared functions such as tool issue, aircraft generation equipment, and munitions among each squadron to produce the sortie support flight. Finally, the restructure added maintenance quality assurance for flightline functions to the squadrons to round out the maintenance package. The SMO reported directly to the squadron commander, filling a role intended to parallel that of the squadron operations officer, the supervisor of the aircrew members (Figure 3).
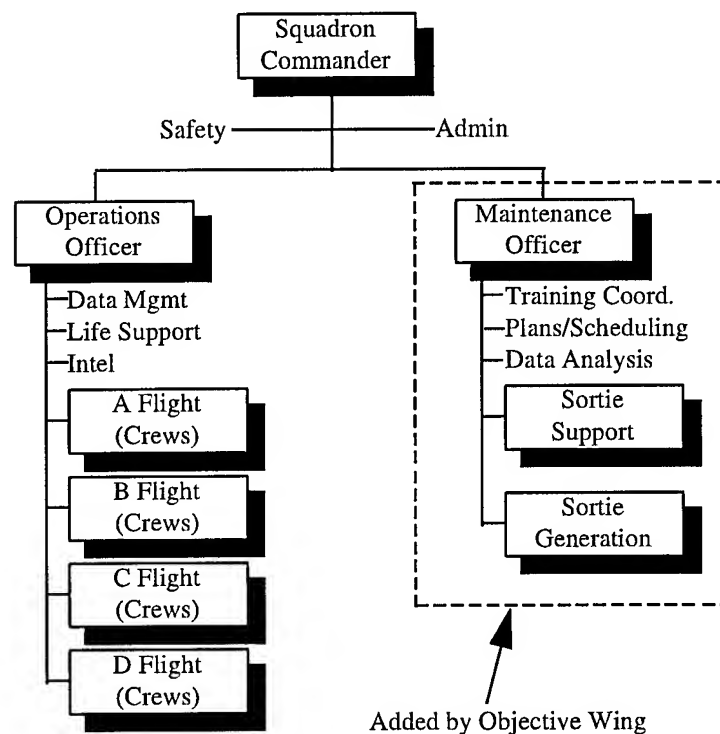
Figure 3. The AFI 38-101 Objective Squadron

Combining operations and maintenance under the flying squadron commander was the extent of the objective wing reorganization at the squadron level. The initial intent was to replace matrixed relationships with clear command lines and to build unit loyalty and cohesiveness in peacetime—in short, to train like we intend to fight and to organize like we intend to operate. While the objective structure incurred some costs, AFM 1-1,

Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force, clearly states the overriding consideration: "Air Force elements should be organized for wartime effectiveness rather than peacetime efficiency."[15] While few would argue that this goal was met, several other unanticipated results occurred as well.

General McPeak pointed out in his video briefing "Tomorrow's Air Force" how the tri-deputy structure resulted in an imbalanced wing, with the DCM owning nearly half the average wing's manpower with an officer-enlisted ratio of 1:50. By contrast, the DO owned about one-quarter of the average wing with an officer-enlisted ratio of 1:1.6.[16] Placing flightline maintenance into the flying squadrons changed the balance of the wing, both in overall manpower numbers and in officer-enlisted ratios. The operations group now has almost half the wing's manpower and its officer-enlisted ratio is nearly 1:5.[17] In General McPeak's words, it also gave "the flying squadron commander much wider scope—a much tougher set of responsibilities."[18]

By late fall of 1991, virtually all of the Air Force had converted to the objective wing structure. The tactical air forces moved most readily into the new structure since it was actually designed for fighters. For the strategic forces in the aligned in accordance with the AFM 66-1 structure, the transition was more difficult and more expensive. Without existing AMUs from which to draw, squadron maintenance organizations had to be built from scratch. The economies of scale achieved by centralizing flightline maintenance seemed to overshadow the benefits of decentralization for units that do not routinely deploy, making the objective structure less attractive. The difficulty and expense involved in separating integrated flightline maintenance into separate squadron maintenance organizations made for a rocky transition. In fact, the airlift community

14

never made a full transition. As a compromise, flightline maintenance stayed together, but the OMS was renamed AGS and moved to the operations group, thereby integrating operations and maintenance at the group vice squadron level. However, in the interest of standardization, all of the Air Force major commands were considered to be in compliance with the new structure by March 1992.[19]

During the 1991–92 period, the Air Force conducted numerous other reorganizations. In addition to adopting the objective wing, the Air Force's three largest major commands (MAC, TAC, and SAC) became Air Combat Command (ACC) and Air Mobility Command (AMC).

The Objective Wing Since 1992

For a variety of reasons, both AMC and Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) have reverted to a centralized maintenance structure. In January 1995, AMC requested permission to return to consolidated maintenance citing the costs of the objective structure and the lack of benefits for non-deploying units. The request was approved in March 1995 and AMC implemented the change immediately.[20]

AFSOC received permission to return to a centralized maintenance structure in the fall of 1995. Due to AFSOC's unique deployment methods, with multiple weapons systems that deploy together as a team and the complex maintenance requirements that this imposes, the entire objective wing structure was difficult to implement. After trying to comply with the new structure for several years at significant cost, AFSOC has returned to a centralized maintenance concept by creating separate aircraft generation squadrons and helicopter generation squadrons to best utilize their resources.[21]

Additionally, the former commander of ACC, General Ralston, questioned the impact of the objective structure on maintenance effectiveness and expressed a desire to improve maintenance within the existing structures.[22] In spring of 1996, the Air Staff began working a proposal from ACC to create a deputy operations group commander for maintenance.[23] The proposal calls for a lieutenant colonel and a chief master sergeant to provide a senior maintenance perspective to the operations group commander. While this is not a major change to the objective wing structure, it could have the effect of creating a de facto AGS commander and superintendent in the operations group, albeit without any formal authority.[24]

Conclusion

The objective wing structure with integrated flightline maintenance is not a new idea; in fact, it is the structure of the original US Air Force wings. However, with over 30 years since the Air Force at large operated this way, and 20 years since TAC returned to consolidated maintenance, this homecoming was a tremendous shock. It was a shock to career maintenance officers who questioned the effect the loss of the DCM and associated staff would have on aircraft generation, fleet health, flight safety and, of course, their careers.

The objective squadron was also a shock for flying squadron commanders who, with no warning, inherited 300 or more maintainers. For rated officers whose contact with the maintenance world consisted of an occasional chat with a crew chief, commanding enlisted troops and gaining responsibility for aircraft maintenance was daunting. As one commander remarked, "It's like getting the general manager's job at Denny's because you

ate there once." Before 1991, fighter squadron commanders expected to lead 30 to 50 college-educated, self-motivated, well-paid, volunteer aviators—in General McPeak's words, "Perhaps not much of a leadership challenge here."[25] Instead, commanders found themselves leading a robust, self-supporting, objective squadron without the leadership experience non-rated officers gain from their earliest days as a lieutenant. General McPeak continued, "Our operations squadron commanders will need to be trained to take on their new responsibilities, but I'm quite confident this will work. This is more than an experiment."[26] The objective structure has indeed been more than an experiment, but the training General McPeak referred to never materialized. This paper addresses such training within the broad context of leadership development in the objective squadron.

Notes

[1] Lt Col Gary D. Sheets, "A History of Wing-Base Organization and Considerations for Change," Report no. 474, (Maxwell AFB, Ala,: Air War College, April 1978), 92.

[2] Ibid., 8.

[3] Maj Theodore W. Eaton, et al., "The Objective Wing Maintenance Structure: A Relic of the Past and Innovation for the Future," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air Command and Staff College, June 1994), 8.

[4] Sheets, 47.

[5] HQ USAF/PRM, "Wing-Base Organization, 1925 to Present," unpublished briefing, (Washington, D.C.: HQ USAF/PRM, October 1991).

[6] Eaton, et al., 9.

[7] Sheets, 65.

[8] Eaton, et al., 12.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 13.

[11] Gen Henry Viccellio, Jr., 1991 Corona South Conference, unpublished briefing, February 1991.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Paul W. Smith, GS-15, HQ USAF/PEO, interviewed by Maj Julia Gonzales, 7 November 1995.

Notes

15 AFM 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, vol. 1, March 1992, 17.

16 Gen Merrill A McPeak, *Selected Works 1990–1994*, (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1995), 106.

17 HQ USAF, Manpower Database, unpublished, 7 November 1995.

18 McPeak, 105.

19 Smith.

20 Ibid.

21 Paul W. Smith, GS-15, HQ USAF/PEO, telephone interview with Maj Julia Gonzales, 19 January 1996.

22 Gen Joseph W. Ralston, commander, Air Combat Command, "Memorandum for ACC Units Down To and Including Wings/CC," subject: Aircraft Maintenance, 21 July 1995.

23 Paul W. Smith, GS-15, HQ USAF/PEO, telephone interview with Maj Julia Gonzales, 13 March 1996.

24 Ibid.

25 McPeak, 105.

26 McPeak, 109.

Chapter 3

Research Method

Introduction

Has the objective squadron structure improved the deployability of combat flying squadrons while magnifying Air Force leadership development problems? In answering this question, the group assumed nothing about the specific nature of any advantages or problems. This chapter describes a research method which enabled the group to begin with a broad approach and gradually refine the areas of greatest potential to develop solutions.

The research plan had a unexpectedly large effect on the recommendations described in this paper. As the reader may infer from the first two chapters, the research group originally formed to examine organization-based solutions to the problems posed by the objective squadron. The logic behind this approach was that because an organizational change had caused certain problems, organizational refinement should be able to solve them. As the group discovered through an opinion survey, the fallacy in this reasoning lay in the fact that many of the rated officer leadership development problems identified in this report existed before the objective restructure in 1991. While the objective squadron may enhance leadership preparation for senior officers, it exposes unresolved

19

leadership development problems at a lower organizational level than before the restructure. In light of this observation, the methodology described below identified not only organizational solutions, but a spectrum of other recommendations to improve squadron-level leadership development.

The research had five phases, not including report preparation, and exploited three approaches to gather information, develop and challenge assumptions, and devise solutions in an applied research format. This chapter describes these phases and approaches.

Discussion by Phase

Phase one was an extensive literature search to locate historical references and previous research in several areas: history and documentation of Air Force organizational structures across all missions, organization theory (especially as it impacts leadership development), objective wing documentation and test reports, objective wing criticism and pertinent research since 1991, military leadership, leadership development, and, later in the project, leadership doctrine.[1]

Phase two defined the scope of the research, developed a flexible list of objective squadron problems and associated considerations, and formulated a second list of potential solutions and research approaches. Phase two overlapped with phase one and incorporated findings from the literature search. This was essentially the brainstorming phase, conducted during a series of four seminars.

Phase three used the results of phase two to plan a series of leadership forums, inviting guests with specific backgrounds to join the research group for sessions lasting

about three hours each. The guests gave a prepared presentation during the first hour (based on topical inputs supplied by the group), followed by two hours of questions, answers, and discussion. This phase tested and refined the products of phase two, provided alternate viewpoints, and baselined the group's background on the squadron organization and leadership. Phase three included the following leadership forums:

Forum 1: USAF Manpower Management, Air Staff Perspective of the 1991 Restructure
Forum 2: USAF Squadron Operations Organization across Various Missions
Forum 3: US Marine Corps and Navy Squadron and Air Wing Organization, Leadership Development, and Officer Career Progression
Forum 4: USAF Squadron Maintenance Organization across Various Missions
Forum 5: USAF Flying Squadron Commander Perspective (2 guests)
Forum 6: USAF Squadron Maintenance (Logistics) Officer Perspective (2 guests)
Forum 7: USAF Operational Support Squadron Commander Perspective
Forum 8: British Royal Air Force Squadron and Air Wing Organization, Leadership Development, and Officer Career Progression
Forum 9: US Army Battalion Organization, Leadership Development, and Officer Career Progression

All forums had one guest except where noted. Forums 4, 5, and 6 featured guests from the Air War College, and seminars 3, 8, and 9 featured exchange and international officers at ACSC. Phase three also included research at the Air Staff to locate unpublished documentation.

Phase four began after the phase three forums were complete. The group used the results from the first three phases as guidelines to formulate an opinion survey that had five objectives:

1. Discover and validate the successes of the objective squadron.
2. Discover and validate problems in the objective squadron.
3. Learn commander views on their preparation to lead the objective squadron.
4. Learn squadron leadership views on Air Force leadership development.
5. Discover solutions to objective squadron leadership development problems.

The survey (Appendix A) was conducted either in person or telephonically using 18 related questions to guide a discussion with the participant. Some of the questions had yes/no answers, but these questions always followed up with, "Why or why not?" The goal was to prompt the participant to freely discuss opinions, experiences, and new ideas in an organized manner that the research group could later include in the findings and recommendations of this report. The interviewers took copious notes as each participant spoke, and these transcribed notes became the raw data for this portion of the research. All of the interviews were valid data in that the group did not conduct an interview if it was learned that the officer was not a member of the desired sample group.

The primary requirement of each participant was that the officer served (or was currently serving) as a squadron commander, operations officer, or squadron maintenance officer in an objective squadron. These three positions constitute the senior officer leadership of a flying squadron. Officers serving in squadrons with contract maintenance were not interviewed, nor were any officers serving in senior leadership positions prior to the 1991 reorganization. Half of the sample group was assigned to Air University, while the other half were serving in active squadrons. Nearly every major weapons system was represented in the sample group, and the survey was nonattributional.

The sample consisted of a total of 73 officers. Of this, 40 were flying squadron commanders, 6 were operations officers, and 27 were maintenance officers. Though this survey was an opinion survey, chapter five cites a few percentages for questions which had yes/no responses. For those questions, the following information provides an estimate of the confidence of the results. During the period since 1991, the Air Force had 135 active combat-deployable squadrons, which includes some squadrons which have

since reverted to their pre-1991 organization (AMC and AFSOC). The group estimated 2.5 average command turnovers and 2.0 average maintenance officer turnovers between January 1992, when most of the Air Force had completed the conversion, and December 1995, when this survey was completed. Therefore, the total populations of current and previous objective squadron commanders and maintenance officers are 337 and 270 respectively. For questions regarding commanders (or those soon to command), the sample size of 46 yields an 85 percent confidence level plus or minus 10 percent. For questions regarding both commanders and maintenance officers, the sample size of 73 in a population of 607 yields 92 percent confidence plus or minus 10 percent.

Phase five consolidated the survey results into 70 pages of transcripts while the group concurrently investigated military leadership development and leadership doctrine. During three seminars, the group formulated the leadership trait matrix and applied leadership model presented in the next chapter. The applied leadership model was especially helpful in lending structure to the variety of anecdotal leadership experiences provided in the survey results.

Conclusion

The five phases of this project supported three main research approaches, namely, an extensive literature search, leadership forums, and an opinion survey. These resources added to the strength of this 10-member interdisciplinary research group, senior ACSC faculty support, and the faculty research advisor to provide a rich source of ideas and methods which supported the goals of the project.

Notes

[1] During phase one, the group located a memorandum from General Ralston, former ACC commander, to his wing commanders. The memo describes four problems that the objective organization poses to effective maintenance. (Chapter five discusses the memo in more detail.) With the reversion of AMC and AFSOC to their pre-1991 organizational structures, the group became concerned that General Ralston's letter was a prelude to ACC's reversion, which would likely cause USAFE and PACAF to follow suit. The group contacted General Ralston's chief of staff to learn the General's intent. He responded that General Ralston was planning no large-scale organizational changes, but he would be open to minor course corrections which build on consistency and unit stability. Therefore, the group's research continued to be relevant (the objective squadron still exists) and may offer the kinds of solutions General Ralston sought. References:

Electronic mail from Maj David K. Gerber, ACSC, to Col Ronald S. Hassan, ACC/CS, 2 November 1995.

Electronic mail response from ACC/CS to Major Gerber, 4 November 1995.

Maj Patrick M. Ward, "Research Project: The Objective Squadron," staff summary package from Col Frank L. Goldstein, ACSC/DR, to ACC/CS, 16 November 1995.

Chapter 4

Applied Leadership Model

Introduction

This chapter develops an applied leadership model which serves two purposes. First, the model provides a concise framework based on the leadership literature search to interpret the survey results in chapter five. Second, it provides an assessment tool to evaluate the recommendations in chapters six and seven. To provide a basis for the leadership model, this chapter first extracts leadership traits and behaviors from the leadership literature. Next, this chapter reasons that traits can be categorized as innate or developmental, and that leadership traits and behaviors are interdependent. Interdependence is a new concept which provides insight into leadership development and the important issue of the transferability of leadership effectiveness from one setting to another. Finally, this chapter develops the applied leadership model to show how leadership traits acting within a certain setting produce specific command behaviors.

According to Thomas E. Cronin in his essay "Thinking and Learning About Leadership," "Virtually anything that can be said about leadership can be denied or disproven."[1] Leadership study is inherently unscientific because it is more a qualitative social science than a quantitative field akin to engineering. Accordingly, this model and

its supporting structure claim no scientific roots. Both emerged from the literature search with the goal of providing a structure for the examination of leadership development.

Leadership Traits: Innate and Developmental

The quantity of literature on leadership is enormous, and there is no intent to reproduce even a small portion of it here. Upon surveying the literature, it quickly becomes clear that every author has a list of important personal qualities leaders must possess. It is no exaggeration to claim that nearly every good trait attributable to mankind eventually appears on one of these lists, however there is a core of leadership traits which seems to appear more regularly than the others. For example, the following traits appear in the draft of a pamphlet on leadership by Dennis M. Drew, "Leading Airmen Into the Twenty-First Century:"[2]

Integrity	Selflessness	Knowledge of Self	Knowledge of People
Physical Courage	Moral Courage	Decisiveness	Knowledge of Job
Dependability	Initiative	Loyalty to Mission	Loyalty to People
Judgment	Endurance	Bearing	

As a first step in examining leadership development, it is helpful to define leadership traits as either innate or developmental. Innate qualities are those more fundamental aspects of the leader's personality which are grounded in values, ethics, and personality and are well-established long before entering military service. Developmental qualities are molded and improved by the environment and organizations, in this case, military service in the Air Force. The classification of leadership qualities as innate or developmental is an intuitive concept, and the boundary between them is not hard and fast. The classification of any particular trait does not matter to the overall concept, and in fact, many of the traits may have both innate and developmental aspects to them. For

26

example, many innate qualities inherent in an individual become more fully developed through the tests of responsibility, commitment, and accountability during military service. Figure 4 lists examples of how common leadership traits might be divided into innate and developmental categories.

Innate Traits	Developmental Traits
Integrity	Knowledge of Job
Selflessness	Knowledge of People
Knowledge of Self	Loyalty to the Mission
Moral Courage	Loyalty to Subordinates
Physical Courage	Decisiveness
	Judgment
	Initiative
	Endurance
	Bearing
	Dependability

Figure 4. Example of Innate and Development Trait Categorization

The difference between innate and development traits is important because the Air Force has less control over innate qualities, except to set and maintain high standards and select those individuals who meet them over those who do not. On the other hand, the Air Force has a much greater potential role in creating and improving developmental leadership qualities through its organizational environment. For example, the Air Force develops job knowledge through the training and experience an individual gains in a career specialty.

Leadership Behaviors

Leadership traits tell only half of the story. The other half lies in leadership behaviors, defined as the specific actions leaders take which distinguish them from followers and managers. Though many leadership traits emerge solely through the words

and deeds of a leader, such actions are not the same as leadership behaviors. For example, an individual may exhibit great loyalty to his associates, but fail to be a leader. There is greater agreement in the literature on leadership behaviors than there is on the exact list of leadership traits, though many authors use differing terms to discuss the same concepts. One of the most direct statements of leadership behavior appears in an essay entitled "What Leaders Really Do" by John P. Kotter. According to Kotter, leaders cope with change while managers cope with complexity.[3] He goes on to list three fundamental behaviors of leaders and to contrast them with their approximate managerial counterparts.

Leaders set a direction, provide "vision."   Managers plan and budget.
Leaders align people to achieve a vision.   Managers staff and organize.
Leaders motivate people.   Managers control and solve problems.[4]

John Gardner captures the same concepts in the opening statement of his book *On Leadership*. "Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers."[5] Simply stated, leaders have vision, build teams, and motivate the teams to achieve the vision.

Interdependence of Key Traits and Behaviors

The developmental traits listed above are interdependent and depend also on the innate traits. Interdependence implies that if an individual does not possess a specific trait, it would be very difficult to possess other traits that depend on that trait. For example, without a knowledge of one's subordinates, it is difficult to be loyal to them. In addition to traits depending on each other, the three primary leadership behaviors

identified by Kotter also depend strongly on developmental qualities. Figure 5 shows a notional relationship between several of the key traits and behaviors.
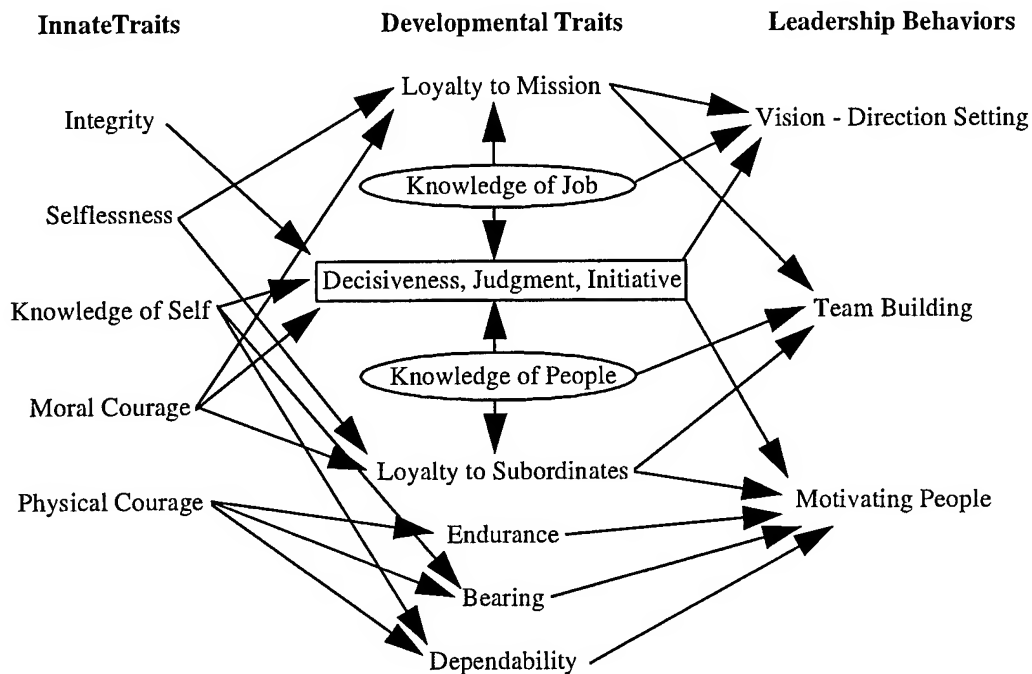
Figure 5. Matrix of Leadership Traits and Behaviors

A few observations are in order. First, two of the most interconnected developmental traits are knowledge of the job and knowledge of subordinates. They lie at the root of many of the other developmental traits and leadership behaviors. Job knowledge in the realm of leadership assumes a meaning beyond technical knowledge of a specific discipline. For the leader, job knowledge includes not only functional competence, but a broad mastery which provides "value-added" competence enabling behavior such as innovation.[6] John Gardner refers to whole system knowledge, including mission and environment.[7] Second, the fact that key leadership traits and behaviors are linked is more important than the specific links depicted in this diagram. Finally, the linkages become

especially important in illustrating the effect of the absence of one or more traits in an individual. The absence of a single developmental trait causes a hole in the overall matrix which weakens the associated leadership behaviors. The absence of several developmental traits clearly cripples the whole system, and would make leadership behavior nearly impossible.

The linkages between traits and behaviors and the dependence of the behaviors on the traits (and not vice versa) also provide a basic insight into leadership preparation. Assuming an individual possesses the innate leadership traits desired by an organization, an organization must build the developmental traits in its potential leaders so that the resulting matrix is strong enough to support the key leadership behaviors and organizational excellence. Organizations typically accomplish this goal by providing individuals with training, specific leadership challenges, wide experience, and feedback.

Leadership Transferability

The issue of leadership transferability arises naturally in this discussion and is important to leadership development in the objective squadron. Does the leadership experience a potential commander gains in squadron operations (one particular setting) transfer to the leadership demands of squadron maintenance (a different setting)?

Thomas E. Cronin addresses the question of transferability of leadership by asking, "Can an effective leader in one situation transfer this capacity, this skill, this style—to another setting?"[8] Cronin answers that the known record is mixed. While there have been many notable leadership transfer successes, there have been just as many notable

failures. He concludes that future success in wholly different situations cannot be reliably predicted based on past experience.[9]

The matrix of leadership traits and behaviors developed above suggests a more definite answer to leadership transferability than that presented by Cronin. Leadership is transferable to a new environment if the individual is capable of the key leadership behaviors in the new environment. Since leadership behaviors depend on developmental leadership traits, the extent to which developmental traits are transferable to the new environment will determine initial leadership effectiveness. Key among the leadership traits which come into question in a new environment are knowledge of people and knowledge of the job. Therefore, the similarity of a leader's knowledge of his new environment to previous environments is one indication of the transferability of leadership.

If a leader, after a transfer, has a few holes or weaknesses in the matrix of leadership traits, he is not necessarily doomed to failure. In this case, performance depends on how rapidly he learns and acclimates to the new setting, thus developing the traits which support effective leadership behaviors. This is called "on-the-job training" or OJT. A significantly long OJT period must necessarily cost the organization due to less effective leadership. How much the organization suffers depends strongly on the level of stress placed on the organization during the OJT period by mission requirements and the competence of leadership below the commander to handle that stress. As first noted above, leadership deals with change, so if a large demand for organizational change takes place in the absence of effective leadership, then the organization will be at risk.

In light of the OJT concept, there are several intuitive ways to reduce risk during leadership transitions. First, take an incremental approach to increases in leadership responsibilities and taskings. Second, insure that leadership challenges come from broadly related, but not necessarily identical, situations. Third, provide pertinent training and experience prior to the assumption of leadership responsibilities. In this way, the leader still develops new and increasingly broad skills, but the organization and its mission are at less risk due to either excessively long OJT periods during high organizational stress, or the inability of the potential leader to adapt to a situation which is drastically different than those encountered previously. To ignore this reality is to accept Cronin's conclusion that future success cannot be predicted based on past experience.

The Applied Leadership Model

Leadership is a special interaction between the leader and followers described by the three key leadership behaviors. The applied leadership model in figure 6 maps the interaction of two key developmental traits of leadership in the objective squadron (knowledge of maintenance processes and knowledge of enlisted issues) against the effectiveness of the squadron maintenance organization in providing mission capable aircraft for combat sorties.[10] The resulting command behaviors fall into quadrants which are more qualitative than quantitative. Cases 1 and 2 do not qualify as leadership, since the traits do not support leadership behavior at the low end of the scale.
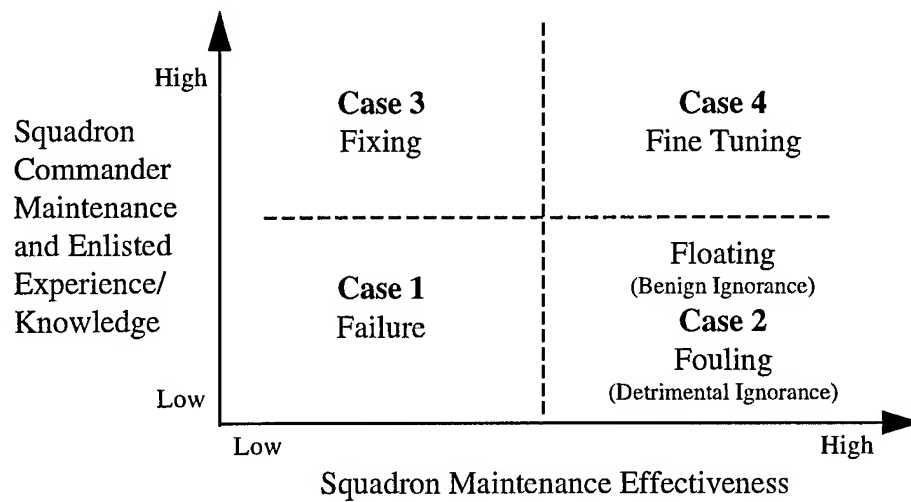
Figure 6. Applied Leadership Model

Every flying squadron has a place on this model. On the vertical scale, the prior

preparation of the squadron commander will determine where he begins on the scale, and

the rate and extent to which he learns the job determine how fast and how far up the scale

he will move. On the horizontal axis, the squadron maintenance effectiveness is an

abstract concept describing how well squadron maintenance is meeting objectives.

Squadrons experience variations in maintenance effectiveness due to factors both within

and beyond their control.

In case 1, the maintenance organization has effectiveness problems, and the squadron

commander lacks the preparation to facilitate a change. The failure in leadership could

occur in any of the three primary leadership behaviors: vision, team building, or

motivation. Early warning signs of such a failure may include decreasing unit discipline

with increases in theft, alcohol abuse, or harassment. Procedural attention to detail and

documentation falter, with rising numbers of repeat failures, ground aborts, and air aborts.

If no corrective action occurs, an outside authority may intervene and change the

squadron leadership. In the worst case, the squadron may experience a class A mishap or experience unacceptable combat losses, losing aircraft and lives.

As a case 1 situation deteriorates, new maintenance supervision might arrive in the squadron or existing supervision might facilitate the necessary improvements. If the maintenance organization unilaterally improved its effectiveness, then the squadron would move to case 2, but through no input from the squadron commander. On the other hand, if the squadron commander facilitated a solution after his OJT period, then he would effectively move the squadron to a case 3 situation. The only question is how bad the situation will get while the commander is learning his job, and whether he will be able to recover and turn the unit around. It should be emphasized here that leaders are not by definition problem solvers.[11] Instead, they serve as facilitators to identify a problem and enable others to solve it.

In case 2, the maintenance organization is effective, but the squadron commander still has little preparation for command. In this instance, there are two possible relationships between the unprepared commander and the maintenance organization. The first is called the floater, characterized by benign ignorance. He neither hurts nor helps the maintenance organization in his decisions. Though the maintenance organization is effective, the squadron commander has no vision and is thus unable to facilitate an improvement. The second case 2 possibility is the fouler, characterized by detrimental ignorance. This commander makes decisions that hurt maintenance effectiveness. One example of the case 2 fouler is the commander who demands constantly high sortie rates at the expense of preventive maintenance.

Case 3 is the fixing commander, an officer with a strong background in maintenance essentials and supervision of enlisted personnel. In case 3, good leadership is dramatically visible. For some reason, maintenance effectiveness is low, but the commander is able to analyze the problem, establish a vision to facilitate a solution, and align and motivate the team to execute the solution. The effective case 3 commander, given enough time, meets the challenge of leadership and moves the squadron to case 4.

Case 4 is the fine tuning commander, since both the maintenance organization is effective and the squadron commander has the background to lead the maintainers. This best case situation results in a continuously improving organization both in terms of mission effectiveness and in leadership development. The case 4 commander may be the only commander with the preparation and time to even address leadership development in the squadron. This is the only squadron the Air Force should feel comfortable sending into combat.

Conclusion

This chapter ties key leadership concepts to this research via the matrix of leadership traits and the applied leadership model. Every major writer on leadership has a long list of leadership traits. Though many writers vary in their list of traits, most agree in principle on fundamental leadership behaviors. This chapter answers the oft-posed question, "Are leaders born or made?" with the assertion that leaders are born *and* made. Some leadership traits are innate, some are developmental, and they are interdependent and form a matrix which supports leadership behaviors. The extent to which leadership ability transfers from one situation to another depends on whether specific developmental

traits are common to the two situations. If the traits are not common, the magnitude of

the difference determines the duration of the leader's OJT. Mapping leadership-critical

traits against the effectiveness of the organization produces the applied leadership model.

Notes

[1] Thomas E. Cronin, "Thinking and Learning About Leadership," in *Military Leadership, In Pursuit of Excellence*, Robert L. Taylor and William E. Roenbach, eds., 2d ed. (Boulder, Westview Press, 1992), 61.

[2] Dennis M. Drew, "Leading Airmen Into the Twenty-First Century," unpublished draft intended for publication, (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: School of Advanced Airpower Studies), 40.

[3] John P. Kotter, "What Leaders Really Do," in *Military Leadership, In Pursuit of Excellence*, Robert L. Taylor and William E. Roenbach, eds., 2d ed. (Boulder, Westview Press, 1992), 22.

[4] Ibid., 22–26.

[5] John W. Gardner, *On Leadership*, (New York, The Free Press, 1990), 1.

[6] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, "The Credibility Factor: What People Expect of Leaders" in *Military Leadership, In Pursuit of Excellence*, Robert L. Taylor and William E. Roenbach, eds., 2d ed. (Boulder, Westview Press, 1992), 134.

[7] Gardner, 50.

[8] Cronin, 63.

[9] Ibid.

[10] The research group learned that this model may resemble a management theory construct known as a "window" of some type. A search through management literature failed to discover a diagram or theory which resembles the applied leadership model. Any resemblance of this model to other published constructs is both coincidental and unintentional.

[11] Kotter, 23.

Chapter 5

Survey Results and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the benefits and problems of the objective squadron as identified by the opinion survey. The survey produced four main conclusions, each supported by several subpoints.

1. The objective squadron is more mission capable and deployable.
2. The objective squadron adversely affects maintenance effectiveness and supervision.
3. Squadron commanders do not feel prepared to lead the objective squadron.
4. The Air Force does a poor job preparing officers for command.

This chapter sets the stage for the recommendations presented in chapters six and seven.

A More Mission Capable Squadron

Of the 73 survey participants, 85 percent believed that the reorganization improved the squadron's ability to deploy or increased its mission effectiveness. Both rated officers and maintenance officers expressed some of the same positive views of the new organization, but their viewpoints sometimes differed as to why it is better. Nearly 100 percent of those interviewed offered their opinion of the factors contributing to the objective squadron improvement. Those opinions can be loosely grouped as follows:

Centralized Control

The objective organization centralizes control of squadron operations under one person, the squadron commander. The commander possesses the resources and authority necessary to accomplish both the wartime and peacetime missions. The squadron leadership consists of all the functional supervisors and supporting personnel required for successful deployment and employment in combat operations. These supervisors accurately assess squadron capabilities and limitations and tailor deployment packages accordingly.

Improved Teamwork and Communications

Squadron leadership overwhelmingly believes that the single greatest benefit from the reorganization is better teamwork and improved professional relationships between maintenance and operations. The second benefit of the reorganization is improved communication within the squadron. The squadron commander sets the tone for improved working relationships and consequently, the flow of communication. The reorganization provided a squadron structure which enhances communications.

To achieve even better communications, survey participants repeatedly emphasized the benefit of collocated facilities. Those officers with experience in separate facilities strongly recommended collocation as the most important next step to improving working relationships, communications, and mission effectiveness.

Maintenance Responsiveness

The third most common response among flying squadron commanders was that the reorganization made maintenance more responsive to operational requirements. "I've

noticed a definite improvement in the reaction time from maintenance," one commander remarked. While 25 percent of the squadron commanders viewed maintenance as more responsive, over 55 percent of the maintenance officers interpreted the same circumstances as a consequence of an improved unity of effort from both operations and maintenance. The maintenance officers disagreed that maintenance is any more responsive than before the restructure. In addition to the improved unity of effort, maintenance officers agreed that operations and maintenance more readily share information necessary to accomplish the mission. "Where ops and maintenance once kept information from one another, they now coordinate the same information on a far more frequent basis than before," stated one maintenance officer.

One former maintenance squadron commander offered an explanation for the disparity. He stated, "Timeliness of the response was lacking under the former system." He went on to add that once the flightline received the requirements from operations, the maintenance reply was normally delayed by the required coordination through numerous layers of command and various organizations under the DCM. While individuals were responsive, the coordination process slowed down the entire decision making machine. Another maintenance commander explained that in the objective squadron, "Operators have the opportunity to (1) work much more closely with maintainers since the unit is designed to be autonomous and (2) witness first-hand how decisions are made much faster than before." As a result, rated officers now view maintenance personnel as more responsive to their needs. However, he postulated that this is more of a "perception than reality." Though maintenance personnel accomplish tasks as efficiently as they ever

have, the objective squadron provides a streamlined structure to frame these tasks, improving the effective responsiveness of the system.

Maintenance Effectiveness and Supervision Problems

While operators and maintainers strongly agree on the benefits of the objective squadron, there are some lingering problems. These problems include aircraft maintenance effectiveness and the erosion of maintenance supervision.

The Major Command Perspective

There are serious concerns about the health of aircraft maintenance following the reorganization. Gen Joseph W. Ralston, former commander of ACC, summarized his concerns in a 21 July 1995 memorandum to wing commanders. "In my view, there are at least four significant events that have simultaneously combined to create a climate that may be wearing at the underpinning of sound maintenance in the command. First, the objective wing deleted the central staff functions that provided day-to-day oversight and guidance to maintenance organizations. We no longer have the experienced colonel and maintenance staff which focused every day on the basic fundamentals and health of the fleet." General Ralston also highlights dispersed quality assurance functions, explicit maintenance regulations replaced by instructions, and the changing focus of the inspector general as the three other concerns. The research survey tailgated on General Ralston's letter, asking squadron leadership how they viewed maintenance effectiveness and supervision following the reorganization.

Maintenance Performance

Both the operations and maintenance perspectives are important when evaluating whether the objective squadron has hindered or enhanced maintenance performance. In operations, 63 percent felt that the reorganization enhanced maintenance performance, 12 percent felt it hindered, and 25 percent had no opinion. The maintenance community had a different perspective as 35 percent believed the reorganization enhanced maintenance performance, 46 percent felt it hindered, and 19 percent had no opinion or believed there was no change in performance.

The operators and maintainers who agreed maintenance performance had improved once again cited better communications between the two branches as the major contributing factor. Improved communications had the added benefits of better alignment of squadron objectives and enhanced teamwork. Several operators and maintainers gained a greater understanding of the challenges the other branch must overcome to meet mission requirements. This understanding enhances teamwork, improves positive feedback, and focuses the squadron on mission accomplishment. A typical commander commented, "Absolutely enhanced. Maintenance is working harder to meet the demands of changing operations requirements and operations is more aware of maintenance functions."

The emphasis on better communications cannot be over-emphasized. Prior to the reorganization, maintenance and operations rarely communicated directly, except possibly at an aircraft launch. Now, as a result of the reorganization, both branches work for the same commander, and personnel solve problems at a lower level with much less

coordination. The most common comment regarding maintenance effectiveness was, "enhanced by better communications."

As mentioned earlier, 46 percent of the maintenance officers felt the reorganization hindered maintenance effectiveness. While the reorganization eliminated the operations-maintenance tug-of-war between the wing DCM and DO, it created a gulf between flightline maintenance and back shop maintenance. In addition, it limited the previous flexibility maintenance had to temporarily reassign personnel to adjust for shortages.

The reorganization split maintenance between two groups. The back shops moved to the logistics group while flightline maintenance was absorbed by the flying squadrons in the operations group. In the former tri-deputy organization, the DCM controlled all maintenance functions and could easily move personnel from the back shops to the flightline or vice versa if a particular specialty was short-handed. The objective wing does not have this flexibility since the manpower is split between two groups. Typical comments included, "Maintenance flexibility and effectiveness are hindered. There were more people available to work the aircraft before the reorganization."

Maintenance officers feel pressured by operations to increase sortie production at the expense of preventive maintenance. A contributing factor mentioned by respondents is the rank disparity between the operations officer and squadron maintenance officer. In many flying squadrons the operations officer is a lieutenant colonel, but the most senior squadron maintenance officer is a major. Maintenance officers believe this rank disparity causes increased emphasis on sortie production and forces maintenance to work much harder to meet both the flying schedule and scheduled maintenance. One of the responses

stated, "[Maintenance has been] hindered due to lack of time and personnel resources. Maintenance rolls over to give more, more, and more."

The operations and maintenance communities are split concerning the issue of maintenance effectiveness. While there is no definitive opinion either way, the answers are mostly aligned according to operations and maintenance perspectives. Another significant fact is the unusually high total percentage (23 percent) of "no opinion" answers. Maintenance effectiveness may require more time to assess, and may depend totally on the personality of the squadron commander. One of the undecided answers supports this view, "It depends on how you look at it. In providing the jets, yes, maintenance effectiveness has been enhanced. Looking at maintenance effectiveness statistics, no. Operators want jets at all costs with little concern for maintenance. The squadron commander must be aware that maintainers must sometimes say no."

Maintenance Functional Manager

The squadron commander plays an important but indirect role in the professional development and success of the squadron's maintenance officers. Prior to the reorganization, the squadron maintenance officer's functional career manager was the wing DCM. Following the reorganization, this responsibility remained with the logistics group commander rather than moving to the operations group commander.

This arrangement creates a conflict of loyalties. Who does the squadron maintenance officer really work for? Should the operations group commander become the functional manager for maintenance officers in the operations group? In the objective wing, maintenance officers now divide their careers between the operations and logistics groups under the new career logistician concept. The division poses a problem when

43

maintenance officers seek squadron command. In the operations group, only the operations support squadron commander can be non-rated, while all of the logistics group squadrons are non-rated billets. A maintenance officer in the operations group feels he is at a distinct disadvantage when he competes with officers in the logistics group (who naturally work more closely with the logistics group commander) to earn a squadron command position.

Despite this situation, 68 percent of the maintenance and operations personnel interviewed felt the logistics group commander, the closest equivalent to the former DCM, should remain the maintenance officer functional manager. Since the reorganization is still relatively new, operations group commanders have not had time to gain the knowledge necessary to advise maintenance officers.

In their comments, some squadron leaders considered the recent absorption of maintenance officers into the logistics career field. They believed that functional management may become irrelevant as the pure maintenance officer career field dissolves. As one respondent stated, "No [the operations group commander should not be the functional manager for maintenance officers], but in the future, it may be a moot point as nonmaintainers become logistics group commanders. The current initiative for a generic logistician career specialty for field graders who have had at least two different logistics jobs as a company grader may also be a factor. Also, as pilots grow up in the objective wing, they will have a basic understanding of maintenance career progression and could give just as good advice as a nonmaintainer logistics group commander."

Hindered Career Paths

Both the maintenance and operations communities believe that the reorganization has hindered maintenance officers' career opportunities. Information supplied at the Squadron Maintenance Officers' Conference at Tyndall Air Force Base, 3–5 October 1995, further validated this perception. According to data prepared by ACC, squadron maintenance officer promotions to lieutenant colonel over the past two years have significantly trailed the maintenance average with a 50 percent promotion selection rate compared to an overall Air Force maintenance average of 65–70 percent.[1]

The survey indicated that over 70 percent of former and current squadron leaders believe that the restructure hurt maintenance officer careers primarily due to the loss of potential command billets. Prior to the reorganization, a maintenance officer had three or four squadron command opportunities within the wing. In the objective wing, a maintenance officer can aspire to only one purely maintenance command billet.[2] Even though the career field has expanded to include other logistics squadrons such as transportation and supply, the competition has also expanded to include the officers in those additional career fields. As one maintenance commander stated, "There are fewer opportunities for maintenance officers to get a command, but this is a cost of doing business."

Objective Squadron Commander Preparation

The survey vividly illustrated several deficiencies in developing well-prepared and competent squadron commanders. Sixty percent of the squadron commanders

45

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interviewed felt they were not adequately prepared for the role when they assumed command. Only 31 percent felt they were prepared and 9 percent had neutral feelings.

Insufficient Enlisted Supervisory Experience

Commanders pointed out that the Air Force does not develop rated officer leaders early in their careers. One commander described the typical flow for aviators in quest of squadron command. "They begin their career learning the technical aspects of being the best aviator possible. As they move up to mid-captain, there are few real opportunities to personally be in charge of anyone—especially enlisted personnel. At the mid- to senior-captain level they may become a flight commander. This entails supervising five to ten other rated officers and provides excellent leadership training and a requirement to write performance reports on three to six other officers. A major typically attends intermediate service school and then moves to a staff job. At the staff, officers learn new skills and become more rounded, but they do not normally get experience supervising enlisted personnel. Following the staff job, our prospective squadron commander finds himself returning to an operational flying assignment. Most future commanders fill the position of squadron operations officer for at least one year before being offered the opportunity of squadron command." At no point in the typical career flow does the officer gain experience beyond leading other rated officers. "Perhaps not much of a leadership challenge here," as General McPeak states.[3] As a result, the majority of commanders felt overwhelmed leading 300 or more enlisted maintainers. Another commander stated, "It is impossible to know, expect, or plan for the amount of time it takes to take care of people . . . pilots miss the leadership track when it comes to preparedness for command."

Time Management Problems and Personnel Issues

Many commanders said their biggest challenge was time management. The job entails everything from checking on the swing shift maintainers near midnight to a pre-dawn flight briefing to attending social functions. "There just doesn't seem to be enough time in a day," was a common remark. Working "people issues" such as assignments also takes a great deal of time, as do "unproductive but mandatory meetings."

Most commanders stated that discipline was their toughest personnel problem. According to one commander, "Two percent of the people cause 90 percent of the problems." Every commander valued a topnotch first sergeant and a good relationship with the Judge Advocate General as keys to meet the challenge of fair and consistent discipline. "The whole squadron is watching (or will find out) and the commander's credibility and reputation is at stake."

The fact that everyone cannot exceed Air Force standards, nor can all squadron personnel achieve the top job or assignment were also command leadership challenges. Commanders found it especially difficult to tell someone why they did not receive a "definitely promote" on their promotion recommendation, or worse yet, why they were not promoted. Commanders highlighted that it is absolutely critical to give honest feedback to the troops. Tell them not only when they do something well, but when they need improvement, and offer suggestions on how to do better. Honest feedback long before an individual is considered for promotion or special duties gives that individual the best chance to improve and compete favorably. Should little improvement take place after the commander has provided feedback, then the commander has less difficulty conveying bad news.

Insufficient Maintenance Knowledge

A majority of commanders cited maintenance knowledge as another problem area. Since most of commanders surveyed had limited experience with maintainers prior to assuming command, they were in a learning mode for an estimated three to six months as they learned the various processes and reporting methods that indicate maintenance effectiveness. They felt their steep learning curve often prevented them from effectively commanding that part of the squadron which makes up the majority of personnel, and made it difficult to balance conflicting operations and maintenance demands. General Ralston, former commander of ACC, echoed this statement saying that squadron commanders should devote 80 percent of their time to maintenance and 20 percent to operations.[4] Commanders felt that it was extremely important to frequently visit the maintenance shops and wear maintenance clothing (the battle dress uniform). One commander stated, "good leadership is not built behind a desk."

Limited Understanding of Supporting Agencies

Many commanders felt that not only did they lack development in the necessary leadership skills, but they also had a limited practical understanding of many important support agencies and processes. Several squadron commanders emphasized that while they did not have to know the specifics of maintenance, legal affairs, or budgeting, they had to know how to spot problems early on in order to facilitate a timely solution.

On-The-Job Training Affects Mission-Ready Status

Another concern was the ability of squadron commanders to maintain mission-ready status. Sixty-one percent indicated they were able to maintain mission-ready status, but

they raised some interesting issues. Most commanders indicated that it was critical to lead not only on the ground but also in the air, and while they may not be the squadron's best pilot, they should definitely be in the top handful. According to one commander, "The best pilots in the squadron are the 10-year captains." Several commanders also mentioned that the objective structure has made the operations officer the "lead pilot" of the squadron. The squadron commander simply has too many other tasks to perform that keep him from flying enough to fulfill the lead pilot role.

Numerous commanders pointed out that while they must know the workings of the whole squadron, their credibility came from their flying skills, and regular sorties best kept them in touch with squadron operations. A few commanders acknowledged that there is not enough time to maintain mission ready status unless the commander trusts squadron personnel to do their jobs. "There is too much going on and too many issues erupting to get bogged down in the trenches. The most productive time spent by a squadron commander is placing the right person in the right job."

Most commanders found it much easier to maintain mission ready status if they had flown the aircraft for at least the year immediately prior to assuming command. The optimum situation cited by commanders was to serve as the operations officer and as an instructor before moving into the command billet. Better flying skills upon the assumption of command permitted these officers to devote more time to maintenance issues. The squadron commanders who felt least prepared were those that came straight from a staff job or school to the squadron commander position. They had to work hard not only to regain minimal proficiency in the aircraft (with limited success), but to

simultaneously learn the other tasks of command. Additionally, such a transition denied the commander any time to observe how the squadron operates.

Commanders mentioned two other factors that affected their ability to maintain mission-ready status. In the first case, long deployments to remote locations typically posed fewer problems and decreased responsibilities compared to commanding at the home station. Such deployments permit the commander to more easily maintain mission-ready status. The second factor was the personality of the operations group commander. If the operations group commander did not place high priority on flying expertise, the subordinate squadron commanders had difficulty maintaining mission-ready status. As one commander stated, "I filled all of the squares, but did not consider myself mission-ready. There are not enough hours in the day."

Poor Air Force Leadership Development

Over 70 percent of the commanders interviewed felt that the Air Force does a poor job developing leaders. Of all of the topics in the survey, this issue evoked more spirited responses than any other. In answering whether the Air Force does a good job developing leaders, typical negative answers were "terrible," "totally inadequate," and "absolutely not," and often included emphatic gestures and gripping explanations. The 30 percent of the commanders who answered this question affirmatively lacked conviction in their responses. Typical "positive" responses included, "The Air Force does an adequate job, but it is not as good as it could be," or, "fairly good, but there are large gaps in leadership development." Some responses implied that since the Air Force is more technical than the other services, leadership was easier. Another common comment was that the Air

Force does a great job developing managers, but a terrible job developing leaders. A significant number of commanders remarked that other US military services do a much better job developing leaders.

Mentorship

A majority of those interviewed cited a weak to non-existent mentor program as a significant deficiency in the Air Force's leadership development. Survey responses indicate that most commanders want a structured mentor program, and they feel more has been spoken and written than actually accomplished. The demands of the current operations tempo on squadron commanders and operations group commanders are a big obstacle to an effective mentoring program. The survey also encountered isolated instances of an anti-mentoring mindset. "I wasn't mentored, so why should my replacement have to be mentored?"

The survey found a few examples of effective mentorship. The most successful cases involved former commanders that took the time to mentor their operations officer by sharing as many of the non-operations experiences as possible. Such experiences included maintenance production meetings, walking through different work areas of the squadron, and meetings with a cross-section of personnel from other base agencies. Effective mentoring also included discussions with supervisors and the first sergeant on recognition programs, operations officer input into the selection of the squadron's top performers, and discussions on disciplinary problems in the squadron. In administrative discipline cases, the commander invited the operations officer to observe the procedure or ensured the operations officer was a member on at least one court martial board. A few squadron commanders extended the mentorship program to flight commanders with

excellent results. Though mentoring took commanders away from what they described as their primary duties, in nearly all cases they felt it was well worth the time investment.

Leadership Opportunities

The majority of the commanders felt the Air Force does not provide rated officers with nearly enough leadership opportunities prior to assuming command. In an extreme case, one of the commanders stated that the first time he had to write an Officer Performance Report (OPR) was as a lieutenant colonel operations officer. In most cases, leadership opportunities are limited to flight command, staff office chief, and operations officer, none of which include supervising enlisted personnel.

Maintenance Experience Early in Career Development

Commanders and squadron maintenance officers were evenly split on the value of providing maintenance experience earlier in a rated officer's career. Those in favor of enhancing maintenance knowledge in this way either had personal experience or observed the benefits other officers gained from such experience. Earlier maintenance experience would be similar to the rated supplement programs of years past and would provide practical leadership experience along with first-hand maintenance knowledge.

Commanders who disagreed with moving rated officers into maintenance were mainly concerned with manning issues. With increased operations tempos and limited manning, they did not see any way to release their flyers to nonflying or even limited-flying positions in the squadron. Though they believed the operators would definitely benefit from such a program, the cost is simply too high. "Operators must remain focused on flying and rely on normal day-to-day interaction with maintenance to learn

what they need to know." A few commanders and maintenance officers pointed out that moving rated officers into maintenance would dilute the professional development of the maintenance officers. These commanders felt they could accomplish the desired professional growth in the flyers through an effective mentor program.

Aircrew Members are Flyers First

To insure the core competencies of the Air Force, aviators must master their weapons systems. For the first 10 years of service, the Air Force aviator typically performs duties in an aircraft cockpit. In this environment, leadership opportunities include commanding a crew or a flight of aircraft which are also composed of professional aviators. This career path develops highly knowledgeable technicians who master their craft, but also regard themselves as aviators rather than officers. A majority of squadron commanders (61 percent) and squadron maintenance officers (71 percent) support this assertion.

The "aviator first" mentality has both pros and cons. The Air Force is a technology-driven service that requires extremely capable specialists to operate advanced weaponry. Expensive training programs yield competent aviators who fight and win our nation's wars. While success in a chosen specialty is commendable for a technician, it does not automatically produce the well-rounded officer necessary for future leadership roles.

A minority of the commanders and maintenance officers insisted that the Air Force has no problem in this area, believing that line aircrew members are officers first, then aviators. One commander suggested that the subject is as black and white as reviewing the Air Force oath of office. One maintenance officer emphatically stated, "if there is any doubt to this question, then the Air Force is in serious trouble . . . any commissioned officer from any service is an officer first and a career specialist second."

Both technical skill and officer development play important roles in today's Air Force, but only 20 percent of the senior squadron leaders felt that the Air Force adequately balances these requirements. The majority firmly believed that company grade officers should concentrate on technical skills early in their career and shift to officer development in the field grades.

Organizational Structure Yields Aviator First Mentality

The survey revealed a direct correlation between the "flyer first" perception and squadron organization. A clear majority (79 percent) of the senior squadron leadership stated that squadron structure drives the "flyer first" mindset. Statements such as, "Operators don't get the opportunity to gain much experience in leading large numbers of people until they reach squadron commander," support this opinion.

In all weapon systems, respondents pointed out the minimal opportunities rated officers have to gain true leadership experience. Even in heavy aircraft squadrons, the operations branch is relatively small in manpower when compared to the maintenance branch. For example, the operations side of a heavy aircraft squadron is typically organized into three flights of three to five crews. In this structure a total of three officers out of forty-five have the opportunity to gain official leadership experience. A typical maintenance branch has two officers for every 150 enlisted while an operations branch still has three officers for every enlisted. Though the objective structure better balances the officer-enlisted ratio among the groups in the wing, the ratio within the squadrons is still extremely imbalanced. Such an imbalance throws away any opportunity to give junior rated officers experience leading enlisted personnel.

A Balance of In-flight Leadership and Ground Leadership is Essential

While commanders felt that their flying skills must provide a credible example to both operators and maintainers, they also overwhelmingly (95 percent) agreed that leadership on the ground is as important as in-flight leadership and flying ability. One quarter of the past and current squadron commanders went further, saying that ground leadership was *much more* critical to smooth and effective operations. "Leadership on the ground is the true test of commandership qualities. Without a steady helm, squadron operations will cease. The primary focus within the organization must be on the people. They are literally the center of gravity."

No Effective Leadership Training Program

Nearly all of the commanders felt that, in addition to providing inadequate practical experience, the Air Force lacks effective leadership training programs.[5] Most felt their training occurred primarily on-the-job. Commanders felt the courses taught by the major commands were inadequate to meet the needs of a new commander. These courses tended to be a broad-brush overview of some of the tools available to commanders. The majority of the time was spent with the major command deputy chiefs of staff discussing their vision and headquarters staff projects. Very little time was devoted to specific leadership issues. Lastly, many of the commanders attended these courses well after assuming command, after they had already learned most of their lessons through trial and error.

Some respondents felt the Air Force's formal Professional Military Education (PME) schools, namely Squadron Officer School (SOS) and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), provide an adequate leadership foundation, but fall well short in applied

leadership and squadron commander preparation. Respondents felt SOS concentrates on interaction with officers from other career fields, which is valuable for a squadron commander who will need to work with the various officers in the wing. However, SOS spends little time on enlisted issues. ACSC prepares officers for staff duties, but squadron command and leadership development is a minor part of the syllabus. Commanders stated they received no training on leading, motivating, counseling, or even disciplining enlisted personnel.

Some of the commanders felt their leadership development depended on chance— being in the right place at the right time. Some of the commanders had leadership opportunities early in their career while others did not. Still other commanders saw the entire process as contingent on self-development. They saw the need to personally seek the additional preparation necessary for command. Some saw higher education as an opportunity to prepare for a leadership role, especially those who earned their master's degree in military history or psychology.

Of the minority of commanders who felt there is a system in place to develop leadership, most believed it is up to the individual to take advantage of it. These commanders believe an open door policy provides future commanders with the necessary mentorship opportunities, as do social events and other forums. Another opinion maintained that promotions enhance leadership development by testing an officer's leadership with every promotion and corresponding increase in responsibility.

Maintenance Officer Observations

Sixty percent of the squadron maintenance officers also felt the Air Force does not do an adequate job developing its future leaders. They agreed that the Air Force produces

managers and not leaders. They remarked that many commanders were extremely concerned with the bottom line, but were unable to lead the troops to achieve the desired results. They lack the people skills essential to effective command. Unlike the maintenance career field, where officers must lead from the time they arrive in the squadron, maintenance officers noted that rated commanders have minimal leadership opportunities during the formative years of their Air Force career (the first 10 years). Consequently, when rated officers lead for the first time as a flying squadron commander, it is on a much larger scale in an environment which does not tolerate failure.

The squadron maintenance officers also noticed the lack of mentorship and one-on-one feedback. They commented on an absence of specific commander training, remarking that natural leaders rise to the top and perform well, but many potentially good leaders could rise only through proper training.

Approximately 40 percent of the squadron maintenance officers said the Air Force was doing a good job developing its leaders. Like the operators, their conviction was less than absolute. They also said the Air Force provided the opportunity to develop leadership, but it was up to the individual to take advantage of what is available to them. Some of the squadron maintenance officers cited professional military education as an example of such an opportunity.

Command Preparation is Random

Whether or not a commander believed the Air Force prepared him for command, the wide variety of circumstances behind each commander's personal leadership development strongly supports the conclusion that leadership development in the Air Force is essentially a random process. Several commanders felt that another apt

description of Air Force leadership development is osmosis or learning through passive observation that leads to a sink-or-swim situation upon assuming command. Assuming command of a troubled squadron further compounded command effectiveness problems.

Though the majority of commanders did not feel prepared to lead, when asked to identify the personal experience which best prepared them, approximately one quarter of the flying squadron commanders believed their time as an operations officer was the most important. One respondent believed operations officer experience should be mandatory for command. A second quarter of the commanders felt experiences in various other jobs best prepared them for command. These jobs included staff work at higher headquarters, the wing inspection and operational exercise office, detachment commander on deployments, and squadron-level additional duties. A third quarter of the commanders felt best prepared by the major command squadron commander and senior leader maintenance schools, to include a course intermittently taught at Air University. The remainder of the commanders felt no single event prepared them, but the sum of their Air Force experience had provided them with the tools they used as commanders. These experiences included Air Force quality training, reading books on leadership, and various other experiences interfacing with people. Most of the individuals (60 percent), especially in the last group, did not feel that the culmination of life experiences was adequate training for the job.

Conclusion

If *feeling* unprepared equates to commanders in fact *being* unprepared, then based on the survey, 60 percent of the squadrons fall into cases 1 and 2 of the applied leadership

model in chapter four. Assuming that maintenance effectiveness (based on factors within the control of the squadron) is in general very good, say 85 percent across all squadrons in the USAF, the following distribution results:

<div align="center">

Case 1 Fouling:	9%
Case 2 Floating:	51%
Case 3 Fixing:	6%
Case 4 Fine Tuning:	34%

</div>

If the results of the survey are true in general, then the conclusions are sobering. Some squadrons are doing very well (case 4), but the number of squadrons in cases 1 and 2 is unacceptable. Case 3 is also disappointing, because it signifies the relative infrequency of a prepared commander matched with a squadron that is in trouble.

If there is a concept which explains the substance and logic to the Air Force's leadership development process, that concept evaded this survey and a significant number of senior officers. The Air Force does an excellent job developing effectiveness in its core competencies. It may be time to develop and include "airpower leadership" in the list of core competencies.

The recommendations in the next two chapters describe a path towards better Air Force leadership development. All of the recommendations have their roots in the survey results and leadership forums devoted to understanding leadership development in general and Air Force leadership specifically.

Notes

[1] Headquarters ACC/LGQP, "ACC Squadron Maintenance Officers' Conference," unpublished slides, (Langley AFB, Va.: 3 October 1995).

Notes

[2] Wings that adopted the true objective structure experienced a loss of maintenance officer command billets. This is not the case in a few wings that never reorganized.

[3] Gen Merrill A. McPeak, *Selected Works 1990–1994*, (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1995), 105.

[4] Gen Joseph W. Ralston, "ACC Squadron Commanders' Course," keynote address, (Langley AFB, Va.: October 1995).

[5] See also Lt Col Walter L. Burns, "The Objective Wing: A Critical Analysis," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, April 1995), 12. Lt Col Burns reached a related conclusion in this paper via a statistical survey. The statement, "Objective wing squadron commanders are adequately trained" received the second lowest support among 20 survey questions and a sample size of 140 officers.

Chapter 6

Individual Recommendations

Introduction

There is a natural feedback process by which future objective squadron commanders will be more prepared for command responsibilities simply because they have been raised in the objective system. Junior officers observe the demands on current commanders and logically attempt to prepare themselves for the opportunity to command. The survey indicated that this natural feedback is taking place, but the first several "generations" of commanders were clearly blindsided by the reorganization. As much as personal initiative is a critical part of the preparation process, it solves only part of the problem.

This chapter presents individual recommendations that any officer can use to improve leadership development in the squadron by training his subordinates. The success of these ideas depends on the personality and initiative of the officer employing them. These ideas also assume that current Air Force organization, education, training, and career paths will not change. The institutional recommendations in chapter seven address those higher level issues.

Training Subordinates

The self-improvement approach to leadership preparation commonly dominates leadership texts such as Warren Bennis' recent book, *On Becoming a Leader.* Unfortunately, leadership is a social skill requiring at least two people—a leader and a follower. The self-improvement approach potentially solves an important aspect of education in leadership development, but it does little to provide practical interpersonal experience or mentoring from established leaders. In light of this fact, these recommendations emphasize training subordinates in leadership skills.

Training is one of the Air Force's strongest functions when it comes to mission tasks, yet it is notably lacking in the area of leadership development.[1] One commander estimated that the Air Force readily dedicates several thousand hours of formal education and training (and even more money) to produce a combat aviator, while investing perhaps one or two hundred hours to formally develop a squadron commander. Few leadership texts address the task of training one's subordinates to be leaders, though this is arguably a requirement of effective leadership on par with organizational mission accomplishment.[2]

It is difficult to confront a subordinate with subjective criticism of a socially-oriented, interpersonal skill. Honest criticism of subordinate performance comes easily when teaching technical skills, but criticism of personal attributes is a wholly different matter. During flight training, it is a common assertion that most of the learning occurs in the debriefing, long after the mission is complete. To avoid providing feedback to subordinates on leadership performance, as awkward and uncomfortable as it may be, is tantamount to the instructor skipping the debrief.

When providing leadership feedback, it is important to assess not only the results of the task, but the means employed to achieve those results. It is easy and quite common for an officer to produce a successful project by doing all of the work himself, under the assumption that he can do a better job more quickly. This is not leadership development. On the other hand, an officer leading a team which produces average results may have learned much more about leadership than the officer who chose to do everything himself. That the means may be more important than the end is fundamental to mentoring leadership development.

Another important aspect of leadership development in subordinates is the notion that leadership cannot be taught without a voluntary willingness of the student to learn. The best first step a leader can take to promote leadership development in his subordinates is to instill in them a desire to learn about leadership and broaden their leadership experience with an eye toward future responsibilities. The prime obstacle to this task is the overriding emphasis placed on mastery of technological skills in very narrowly defined leadership situations early in the rated officer's career. Such emphasis makes the requirements for advancement clear to young rated officers, and the message they receive rarely promotes a desire to broadly develop their leadership skills.

Most of the commanders who felt prepared to command reported that their previous commanders had played an active role in preparing them. Such comments were rare among the majority of the commanders who did not feel prepared. Command preparation by a previous supervisor pays off regardless of which squadron an officer eventually commands and truly represents an investment in the future of the Air Force as a whole.

The Air Force illustrates its current career concept in a three-stage column similar to the left side of figure 7.[3] The survey results suggest that the first two layers of this column do not prepare the officer for the top leadership layer. By developing leadership abilities in subordinates through the recommendations which follow, a leader modifies the career concept diagram to look more like the right column in figure 7.[4]
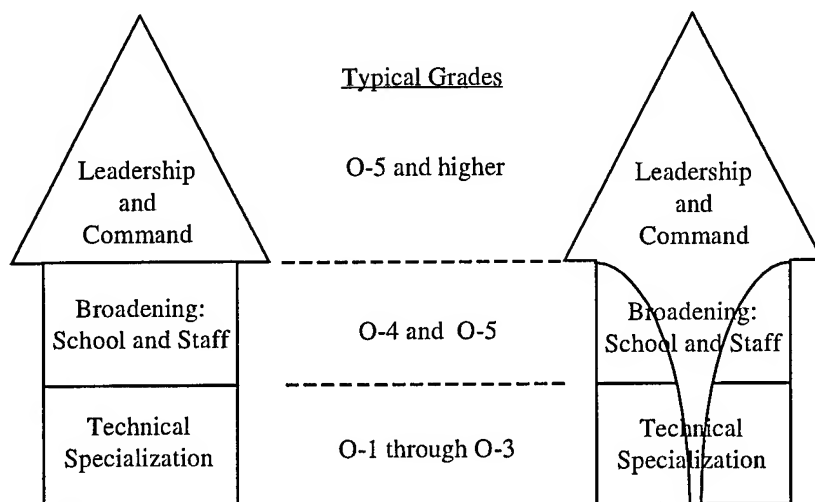
Figure 7. Current and Improved Air Force Career Models

Recommendation 1: Enhance Mentoring

The Air Force recognizes the need for mentoring and has taken rudimentary steps to encourage it. One example is the recent addition to the officer performance report which formally documents performance feedback. This example notwithstanding, the Air Force still seems to be searching for a means to define and institutionalize mentoring. One possibility lies in the application of mentoring to leadership development.

Mentoring instills the desire to learn leadership through informal guidance and feedback based on practical experience. The mentor is in the best position initiate the process and tailor his approach to each subordinate's knowledge, experience, personality,

and readiness for new challenges. Mentoring is inherently valuable, but several tools

enhance the mentoring process by providing practical grist for leadership development.

Such tools include:

Relevant self-study. Encourage reading on military history, biographies, leadership, counseling, psychology and related topics. For officers beginning master's degree programs, encourage study in fields which are relevant to the Air Force and leadership. Guide discussions of ideas and their practical application to the squadron.

Shadow programs. Rated officers can learn about maintenance processes by "shadowing" key maintenance personnel for a day or two. Shadowing includes following them, doing what they do, taking notes, and providing temporary assistance as required.

Senior level meetings. Group and wing level staff meeting meetings provide insight into issues at and above the squadron command level.

Counseling sessions. A universal problem area for new commanders was Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and personnel issues. Permitting junior rated officers to observe UCMJ and other types of counseling sessions (within legal constraints) would expose them to real-world problems and the proper means to deal with them. On the positive side, include junior officers in good situations such as awards presentation, career counseling, and "Stripes for Exceptional Performers" promotions.

Acting commander and other temporary jobs. When the squadron commander or operations officer are on leave or TDY, designate an alternate and empower him to do the whole job while the senior leadership is absent. Avoid "holding onto the leash" by calling in or working issues from long distance, but designate a "watchdog" to insure the acting officer is not overwhelmed. Give the acting commander the keys to the office and all of the responsibilities that go with them. Hold a debriefing upon resumption of command.

Commander's calls. Involve junior officers in the planning and presentation of appropriate topics to the assembled squadron and to field questions.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen Informal Operations-Maintenance Linkages

In the absence of formal command relationships between junior rated officers and

enlisted personnel, informal linkages provide practical experience and knowledge of

enlisted issues to the junior rated officer. Informal linkages have an inconsistent track

record in flying squadrons. Commanders often prod junior officers to "talk to their crew

chief" and "show an interest and appreciation" for maintenance. Unfortunately, maintenance personnel easily recognize contrived interest because it appears superficial and lacks commitment. Depending on the atmosphere in a particular squadron, combined operations-maintenance functions can range from a bona fide combined activity with great interaction, to activities in which the officers are in one group and the enlisted in another with very little interaction. While there is an enormous benefit from the teamwork and esprit de corps which result from a truly integrated squadron, another important reason to build such relationships and participate sincerely and vigorously is to learn about enlisted personnel and maintenance processes. Junior officers must understand that gaining such broad experience early is extremely important to their future effectiveness as a commander.

As noted in chapter five, one way to increase informal operations-maintenance interaction is through collocated facilities. Commanders of squadrons with operations and maintenance in the same building or hangar reported greatly improved teamwork compared to squadrons with separate locations. Commanders with split facilities consistently made it a high priority to find a way to collocate operations and maintenance. The chief obstacle to this goal was cost.

With or without collocated facilities, there are many other tools to enhance informal operations-maintenance interaction:

1. Include a tour of maintenance facilities for new rated officers and include operations in the facilities tour for new maintainers.
2. Combined promotion and awards ceremonies.
3. Combined retirement ceremonies and farewell functions.
4. Combined competitions which evaluate operations and maintenance together.
5. Any of the tasks associated with special assignments listed in the next section.

Three additional concepts merit more in-depth discussion. First, vigorously pursue methods to expose both operations and maintenance personnel to the total mission of the squadron and the role each individual plays in fulfilling the mission. For rated officers, this involves periodic visits to the flightline, hangar, and shop areas, or the shadow programs described above. Officers can lead the effort to involve maintenance in the flying mission on a larger scale, but to some extent, this goal depends on the aircraft the squadron flies. KC-135 squadrons take their maintainers (and personnel from other squadrons) on training missions and permit them to observe operations from both the flight deck and boom position. For aircraft with limited or no additional seating beyond the minimum crew, there are other options to supplement existing incentive ride programs. Fighter and bomber squadrons with routine access to Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation (ACMI, a real-time remote mission viewing and debriefing system) have an enormous asset available. Arranging for maintainers to watch missions in the ACMI facility after launching a participating aircraft vastly increases understanding of the mission, especially if a rated officer explains the action. As more ACMI systems are built into squadrons, involving maintenance in the mission in a "launch, observe, recover" pattern will be increasingly convenient. For those units without home-base ACMI, Red Flag deployments provide the same opportunity.

The second concept, employed by a former commander, expands the dedicated crew chief concept to the "aircraft unit" concept. An aircraft unit is an informal team consisting of the rated crew members and the dedicated and assistant dedicated crew chiefs assigned to a particular squadron aircraft. The group is charged with working together as a team, with special scheduling efforts to permit the crew to fly the assigned

aircraft on as regular a basis as possible. The officers have the opportunity to know the maintainers' families, special circumstances, career history, progression, and aspirations. The officers participated in enlisted performance reports (EPR) reviews, promotion boards, reenlistments, and positive and negative counseling sessions with the maintainers' formal supervisors. The officers also lead the way to educate their aircraft unit on the squadron mission while learning more about their counterparts' duties on the flightline.

The third concept is squadron history. During the recent drawdown, Air Force Headquarters took pains to preserve those squadrons with the longest and most distinguished histories, and deactivate those squadrons whose legacies, though just as proud, were shorter or perhaps less significant. Though the merits of this downsizing method have been debated, it is still rare to find an Air Force squadron which conspicuously displays its history, exploits, famous personalities, and traditions. Furthermore, there is fantastic energy, spirit, and mentorship resources in the alumni of active squadrons which may be tapped through regular squadron reunions. Such reunions pull together operations and maintenance by reminding them of their common legacy of teamwork. Squadrons in the British Royal Air Force are particularly effective in displaying their history and maintaining close connections with squadron alumni. The continuing effort to reinvigorate a squadron's roots and spread its history throughout both its people and facilities has served as a constant source of mission focus for the RAF and for those US Air Force squadrons which have chosen to make the effort.

Recommendation 3: Exploit Broad Leadership Opportunities

Though the formal opportunities to learn about maintenance and gain experience leading enlisted personnel are rare for rated officers in the objective squadron, some possibilities exist. This section describes the leadership-building opportunities that commanders cited as most important to their leadership preparation and general knowledge. Such opportunities are available in special assignments, additional duty selection, limited squadron functional area reorganization, and professional development programs outside the squadron. Providing subordinate officers with the opportunity to develop leadership skills through these tasks and positions is most effective when combined with dedicated and consistent mentoring to guide their efforts.

Special Assignments

Special assignments encompass teams which are formed for specific tasks or short duration functions, after which the team usually dissolves. Such teams are usually informal in that the team leader does not have official supervisory responsibilities over the members of the team, and participation on the team may be voluntary. Special assignments work best as leadership development opportunities when the officer leads a team or participates in a task which includes nonrated officers and enlisted personnel. Special taskings that were cited by former commanders as beneficial to their leadership development included:

1. Project officer for squadron deployments or special missions
2. Detachment commander for a deployed element of aircraft
3. Court martial duty
4. Project officer for squadron-wide functions such as Christmas parties, sports days, squadron picnics, and ski trips
5. Change of command ceremonies at squadron, group, and wing level

6. Group and wing level process action team leaders
7. Red carpet day (spouse day)
8. Squadron and base open houses

One commander used special assignments as leadership development tools in a particularly bold manner. This commander found that the greatest return on his leadership development effort lay in improving the performance of officers in the bottom 50 percent of his squadron. These underachievers could improve the most, while a superstar may only be able to incrementally fine tune his performance. This commander achieved superb results by using special taskings to challenge the bottom 50 percent and committing himself and the superstars to mentoring the newly tasked officers to guide them toward success. This approach also provided the superstars with a practical lesson in leadership development and mentoring other junior officers. This approach is uncommon, as many squadrons give special assignments to their superstars to insure optimum results rather than considering such assignments as a training opportunities to develop leaders.

Additional Duty Selection

Many commanders cited traditionally less glamorous functional areas as the most valuable source of their practical knowledge about maintenance and enlisted issues. Squadron safety officer, maintenance liaison officer, functional check flight (FCF) pilots (liaison with maintenance quality assurance), and working in the wing inspection or exercise evaluation office were all mentioned several times. These positions provide experience with enlisted career paths and promotions, writing EPRs, specialties outside of operations, and coordination with different base organizations than are normally encountered in the flying squadron.

One commander designated the rated safety officer as the chief of squadron safety and enhanced the safety officer's leadership development by giving him supervisory authority over ground and explosives safety NCOs. He charged the team with executing a safety program for the entire squadron instead of each discipline separately. In a similar leadership-enhancing situation, several operations groups have integrated FCF programs into the maintenance quality assurance process to include assigning FCF pilots as supervisors.

Because such duties pull the officer away from a pure operations focus to provide broad experience, they may threaten the officer's rated specialization. An officer should not be selected for such a position before mastering his weapons system. Furthermore, supervisors must communicate the reason for selection and leadership development objectives, and establish a clear mentoring relationship when assigning an officer to such a position. Consider any additional duty not only for its functional nature, but also for its leadership development potential.

Integrate Specific Squadron Functions

Limited functional integration is a small-scale version of the integrated objective squadron concept described in chapter seven. It provides rated officers with broad leadership experience earlier in their careers without removing them from operations. A number of squadrons have combined complementary functional areas found in both operations and maintenance into a single office. One area already described above is squadron safety. Several squadrons have also integrated scheduling and training.

Operations normally schedules aircrew members and missions while maintenance schedules aircraft, servicing, and inspections, as well as insuring correct aircraft

configuration. These functions are highly interdependent and technically similar, yet they have been historically divided both physically and functionally, thereby slowing communications, decreasing flexibility, and hampering unity of effort. The combined office not only improves squadron scheduling, but improves leadership development if the senior officer has both supervisory responsibility over the personnel in the shop and accountability for their performance.

Training is another functional area that has successfully integrated similar functions in operations and maintenance. Squadrons with combined training shops have streamlined documentation, more efficient scheduling, and handle high operations tempos better due to more consistent manning. The officer supervisors gain practical knowledge about enlisted personnel and valuable leadership experience.

Lt Col Walter Burns described another successful concept in his Air War College research paper, "The Objective Wing: A Critical Analysis." Lt Col Burns formed an operations support flight within squadron operations to combine intelligence, life support, and data management personnel under the supervision of a flight commander rather than the squadron operations officer. The operations support flight commander gained valuable supervisory experience well beyond that of a flight commander supervising rated officers. Additionally, the enlisted personnel in the flight preferred the new arrangement because the flight commander (a captain) was a much more accessible supervisor than the very busy and higher ranking squadron operations officer.[5]

Functional integration has demonstrated the potential to improve leadership development and streamline processes in many squadrons across the Air Force. The officer leading the integrated activity must have supervisory responsibility of assigned

officers and enlisted personnel, and his supervisor must establish a clear mentoring relationship to guide leadership development.

Professional Development Opportunities

Rated officer professional development programs provide experience equivalent to the rated supplement programs of the past. Rated supplement programs were non-flying assignments to support specialties which provided rated officers with secondary career specialties and broad officer development. A key assumption in the rated supplement program was that there were enough rated officers to fully man operational squadrons.

AMC has a program which develops leadership later in a junior officer's career called Phoenix Wrench/Phoenix Port. In this program, two rated officers per wing cross-train into maintenance and transportation (aerial port) career fields. Officers remain in the program for two years, during which they assume full supervisory responsibilities and accountability in the alternate specialties while maintaining minimal flying currency. According to AMC Instruction 36-2101, *Rated Officer Professional Development Program (Phoenix Wrench/Phoenix Port)*, wing commanders use this program to add to rated officer professional development by providing "supervisory experience in two support career fields central to AMC operations"[6]

Such a time-out from operational flying to career broaden as a senior captain holds great potential to increase maintenance knowledge and supervisory experience for all major commands. It most likely improves the success of participating officers as a squadron commanders. Unfortunately, such programs share a number of risks. First, career broadening which limits flying challenges the rated officer's core competence in his weapons system. If individuals selected for such a program are not well established in

their weapons systems, such broadening will undercut more fundamental job knowledge and experience. Second, such programs pull rated officers from operations. This is not a problem if there is an excess of rated officers in a particular weapons system, but in light of the current shortages throughout the Air Force, squadron manning must have priority. Third, relatively few officers can take part in such programs, making them at best a very limited solution to the broad problem of leadership development. Finally, such programs, especially if expanded, constitute a career challenge to officers in maintenance and other logistics career fields.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter described tools for supervisors to enhance leadership development in their subordinates. Such tools also directly enhance the leadership abilities of the supervising officer. For these tools to work, subordinates must want to learn, have an opportunity to lead, and receive feedback. Supervisors can create all three of these conditions. Enhanced mentoring combined with the leadership opportunities in special assignments, informal linkages between operations and maintenance, and select additional duties both in and out of the squadron provides a demonstrated path toward better leadership.

Though the recommendations in this chapter apply to individuals, supervisors Air Force–wide must employ them if they are to have broad impact. Chapter seven takes a different approach and describes institutional recommendations which may facilitate less personality-dependent improvements.

Notes

[1] "Training" in this chapter is treated as a practical, applied learning by doing. "Education" is theoretical, knowledge-based, classroom-oriented learning. Both are important.

[2] Many civilian businesses prosper and expand during the tenure of the founder as chief executive officer. The death or departure of the founder often signals the beginning of the end of the business, precisely because the founder, in his zeal for "operational" success, has failed to train competent replacements. Training subordinates to lead insures that the organization will continue to thrive and continue to fulfill its mission. Adapted from Michael Selz, "More Family-Owned Firms Make Plans For Succession by the Next Generation," *The Wall Street Journal* 226 no. 48 (8 September 1995), B2.

[3] Air Force Personnel Center, briefing to ACSC, (Randolph AFB, Tex.: November 1995).

[4] In light of the illustrated career progression concept, below the zone (BTZ) promotions have a potential effect on leadership development. Such promotions may hurt leadership development depending on the reason the officer is promoted. Rapid advancement from below the zone promotions first impact that part of an officer's career (senior captain through the end of the school/staff phase) when broadening takes place. Early promotions do not impact the technical specialization period. If officers are promoted early due to success in their technical specialty, then a compensating degree of career broadening must prepare them to lead effectively in an even shorter period of time than for the on-time officer. If the officer has been promoted early due to broad early leadership experience, the leadership development problem may be less severe, but the early broadening may have undercut technical mastery. The BTZ officer may be a superb technician, but it is more important to his future that he has mastered leadership.

[5] Lt Col Walter L. Burns, "The Objective Wing: A Critical Analysis," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, April 1995), 20.

[6] AMCI 36-2101, *Rated Officer Professional Development Program (Phoenix Wrench/ Phoenix Port)*, 17 April 1995, 1.

Chapter 7

Institutional Recommendations

Introduction

In a service characterized by continuous training where an officer may hold a specific position for only one year before moving on, it is risky to totally rely on personality-dependent leadership development. The following proposals institutionalize improved leadership development through education and training, career paths and command tenure, squadron organization, and leadership doctrine. Institutionalizing strong leadership development ensures the improvements will endure far longer than any single individual's influence.[1]

Recommendation 1: Improve Education and Training

Education during leadership development faces two challenges—content and timing. What should be taught, and when in an officer's career should it be offered? Regarding content, squadron commanders typically attend a squadron commander course and a senior leader maintenance course in addition to leadership training during professional military education.

Squadron Commander Education

Air University (AU) intermittently teaches a squadron commander course. During periods when it has been discontinued, the major commands assumed responsibility for this training. The AU course is typically two weeks long while the command courses generally last a few days. These courses provide basic leadership theory combined with a series of briefings from all agencies on a typical base (chaplain, family support, legal, etc.) to acquaint the prospective commander with the services and support available to him.

Commanders who attended both courses had higher praise for the AU course and felt the major command courses offered little useful additional information. Commanders who attended only the major command course thought that the course was so short and the topics so diverse that no specific area could be covered in enough depth to be useful ("Forty miles wide, but an inch deep . . .").

The major commands offer senior leader maintenance courses. These courses last a few days and provide an academic orientation into maintenance issues and procedures. Commanders generally felt that these courses presented information that was relevant and nice to know, but not specific enough to the daily demands they would encounter as commanders. These courses enhanced general knowledge, but did not shorten the OJT period. Many commanders felt that a wing level maintenance orientation would provide more useful information.

The timeliness problem is straightforward. The majority of commanders attended squadron commander and maintenance courses long after assuming command, so the courses covered information that they had most likely learned through trial and error.

AMC and ACC have required that all command selectees attend the courses prior to command, and other major commands may follow suit, but the lead time is still on the order of weeks or a few months at best. With the advent of the yearly command selection boards, the Air Force may have the flexibility to schedule such courses immediately after the commander list is published.

The overriding impression from the survey was that current command education is a superficial and short-term solution to a long-term problem. There is no way to make up for 15 to 17 years of deficient leadership preparation by sitting future commanders in the classroom for two days or even two weeks. Command education would have more focus if it could build on a relevant foundation of previous leadership experience.

Air Command and Staff College

In the 1995–96 academic year, ACSC syllabus spent 2.11 semester hours out of 36 total hours (6 percent) on leadership and command. Approximately 12 "Commandant's Special" lectures (nonsyllabus lectures predominantly by flag officers) with accompanying seminars also had a leadership and command emphasis, bumping the total up to nearly 10 percent. The leadership and command syllabus covers 44 topics in 67 hours of lectures, seminars, and case studies grouped into three broad areas: leadership environment, leadership tools, and command.[2] A cumulative three weeks out of the entire academic year is disproportionately small for a subject equally or more important than staff work. The following observations may serve as a basis for expanding and refining the curriculum.

The syllabus distinctly emphasizes self-improvement and introspective tasks, as if leadership development is primarily an exercise in personal revelation. Though self-

improvement is an important part of leadership development, the interpersonal and social aspects of leadership are much more important and constitute *the decisive factors* in leadership success.[3] There are a number of role playing and case study exercises from several sources which better develop the social aspects of leadership.[4] The Air Force Senior NCO Academy at Gunter Annex and the Squadron Officer School at Maxwell constitute additional unexploited opportunities to enhance the social aspects of leadership development at ACSC.

The Commandant's Special briefings are excellent and well-received, and the seminars following them are among the most memorable events at ACSC. The general officer viewpoint is interesting and desirable, and officers from Air War College (AWC) contribute greatly to the seminar discussions after the lectures. If AWC played a role in other parts of the leadership and command syllabus, the result would be equally strong because these officers provide the most recent command viewpoint.

Relevant Master's Degrees

Master's degrees are a requirement for advancement in the Air Force, yet the degrees which are commonly available provide little added value to an officer's job or leadership performance. The Air Force should place a premium on value-added degrees and encourage institutions convenient to Air Force bases to offer degrees in fields which more directly enhance leadership development in the officer.

Enhance Training

The basic training syllabi of most weapons systems do not include a maintenance orientation for new rated officers.[5] Most new rated officers do not know how their

weapons system is maintained, the various specialties and training involved in maintenance, or how maintenance is organized to accomplish such tasks both in peacetime and war. A syllabus course which includes a tour of maintenance and weapons facilities at the training unit would show the new rated officer how dependent he is on effective maintenance for mission accomplishment. This orientation would provide a holistic understanding of maintenance that rated officers currently gain only through osmosis, if at all, and provide a seed to later broaden their leadership outlook.

Recommendation 2: Identify Command Career Paths and Enforce Tenure

Command Career Paths

Based on the model from chapter four, most of the recommendations up to this point provide the potential commander with a stronger matrix of developmental traits to better support leadership behavior. The recommendation for command career paths supports the same objective, but additionally prevents the Air Force from inadvertently punching holes in the matrix of developmental traits which the officer cannot hope to fill before assuming command. There are numerous examples of officers who were well prepared to command in one setting, but instead were set up to struggle in another setting, hobbled by career paths that made no sense from a leadership development standpoint.

The command career path concept has a derogatory connotation due to the adverse affects careerism has on organizations and mission accomplishment. The careerist officer places the requirements of personal advancement before the requirements of the mission, his subordinates, and organizational excellence. There is no place for careerism in the

leadership preparation process, but careerism seems to be as pervasive as it is difficult to detect. A number of recent books have identified a growing pool of "proven assessment techniques and psychological instruments for weeding out . . . those with dysfunctional needs for power, status, and control."[6] Proper leadership selection, assessment, and feedback processes to support the development process are other paths to the solution, but as stated earlier, all are beyond the scope of this research.

In the context of this chapter, a command career path is not a list of specific positions which will guarantee selection for command. While a command career path may include specific jobs, it describes certain kinds of experience which the officer can gain in several ways, all of which strengthen the matrix of leadership traits. Included are also certain career events to *avoid* because they weaken the matrix of leadership traits and will adversely affect the officer's ability to command.

Chapter five noted that the Air Force's command preparation process is almost random, but of those commanders who felt well prepared, serving as the squadron operations officer helped a great deal. Some reported that their progression from assistant operations officer to operations officer to commander prepared them even better. Such progression provides valuable and incremental experience, and within the same wing, allows the officer to learn the peculiarities of the local operation before assuming command of a large portion of it. Though the practice of moving future commanders through the operations officer position is common, it is not the rule. Officers who skipped directly to squadron commander with no operations officer experience (including a few who had never been a flight commander) felt disadvantaged.

Most commanders disliked the short period of time between their notification for a specific squadron command and the announced date for the change of command. More notification would smooth their transition, shorten the OJT period, and permit the commander to "hit the ground running" instead of just "hitting the ground."

The career paths immediately before assuming squadron command undercut the flying credibility of several commanders. Some commanders had to change weapons systems and assume command with less than 100 flight hours in the squadron's aircraft and correspondingly low mission experience. Other commanders spent several years in nonflying PME and staff positions and attended requalification en route to command. Requalifying commanders had familiarity with the aircraft and mission, but the lack of time to regain proficiency combined with the fast pace of tactical innovation challenged their credibility in the cockpit. Both of these scenarios were a continuing source of professional embarrassment for the commander and strongly suggest that officers should have the opportunity to become proficient in both the aircraft and mission before assuming command.

Command Tenure

The benefits to the flying squadron of a commander that has overcome the OJT period to become an effective leader are often cut short by the tenure of squadron command. According to Air Force guidelines, a squadron commander should hold the position for two years, but an informal review of squadron command tenures during a five year period (conducted by one of the interviewed commanders) placed the average tenure at 15 months. Most commanders reported an average three- to six-month OJT period, meaning that 20 to 40 percent of the time a squadron has suboptimal leadership.

Additionally, the remaining period between the end of the OJT period and next change of command may be insufficient to see any command initiatives through to completion. Discontinuous command hurts the squadron, and the commanders who had their tenures cut short felt that they did not have a chance to finish the job they started. They missed the opportunity to gain direct feedback on the results of their leadership.

The organizational health of Air Force squadrons would be well served by managing command billets to enable full two-year tenures, but there is another reason to seek this goal: accountability. Any commander can float (as in case 2 of the model in chapter four) for a short period of time, especially if the squadron is strong. It is also possible for a case 1 commander (fouler) to severely damage a squadron and escape responsibility if the change of command takes place soon enough. On the other hand, it is much harder to foul or float for two years. During a two-year tenure, there is no reason why a commander's superiors cannot hold him fully accountable for the organization he has led. Furthermore, a full assessment of a commander's tenure would provide feedback to the commander to enable further personal improvement and feedback to the Air Force's leadership development process to better prepare future leaders.

In summary, the Air Force can simultaneously arrange for the beneficial career path from operations officer to commander, provide more notification prior to change of command, and provide time to gain flying proficiency, vastly improving the probability of effective command. Command tenures shorter than two years should be the exception rather than the rule, both for the benefit of the squadron and to hold the commander fully accountable for his leadership performance.

Recommendation 3: Functionally Integrate the Objective Squadron

Good people can make any organization work, but a better organization can make good people work better.

—Lt Col Gary D. Sheets
A History of Wing-Base Organization

This recommendation describes an organizational adjustment to the objective flying squadron. It promises to further enhance the benefits of the objective structure while providing practical leadership experience to better prepare squadron commanders. The concept builds on the proven benefits of functional integration (chapter six, recommendation three) by using the same principles which guided the 1991 reorganization to push the objective idea downward into the squadron.

This section will review current squadron organization prior to describing the integrated organization and assessing it using several different criteria. The descriptions are characteristic of typical single-seat fighter squadrons since these squadrons have the most constrained manpower problem, however the concepts apply equally to crew squadrons, and any specific differences will be highlighted.

Description

Current Squadron Functional Organization. Squadrons are stovepiped into operations and maintenance beneath the squadron commander (Figure 8). The squadron commander directly supervises the operations officer and maintenance officer, who typically command four and two flights respectively, in addition to various staff offices. Operations flight commanders schedule, instruct, and evaluate the rated officers in their flights, but none of the officers in the flight report to the flight commander for additional

duties. When they are not flying, officers disperse to functional additional duties throughout the squadron such as scheduling, training, weapons and tactics, standardization/evaluation, plans, mobility, and so forth—everything required to run the squadron. Thus, every rated officer effectively works for two different supervisors in a matrixed organization.

Squadron maintenance is not matrixed, but is functionally aligned into the sortie generation flight and the sortie support flight. A single officer commands the sortie generation flight and works through NCO flight chiefs to supervise crew chiefs, weapons personnel, and specialists. Another officer commands the sortie support flight to manage supply, tools, and inspections. Personnel in maintenance work for and are evaluated by a single supervisor.
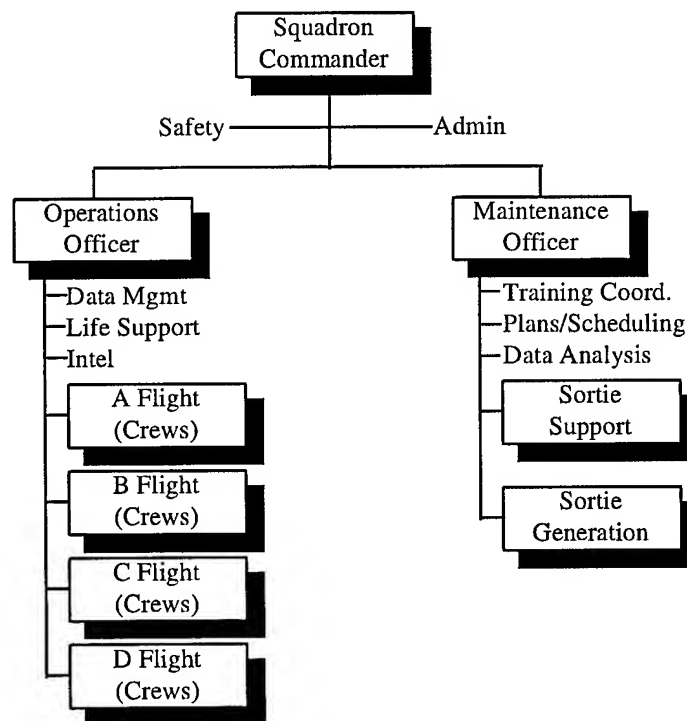

Figure 8. Current Stovepiped Objective Squadron

The Functionally Integrated Objective Squadron. Figure 9 illustrates the functionally integrated objective squadron concept. This organization breaks down the operations/maintenance stovepipe by focusing on *processes and output* rather than operations and maintenance as functional divisions.[7] The primary characteristics of this organization are the elimination of the two-person operations/maintenance officer layer of supervision, the larger number of functionally aligned flights with direct responsibility and accountability, and the integration of all squadron personnel across these flights.
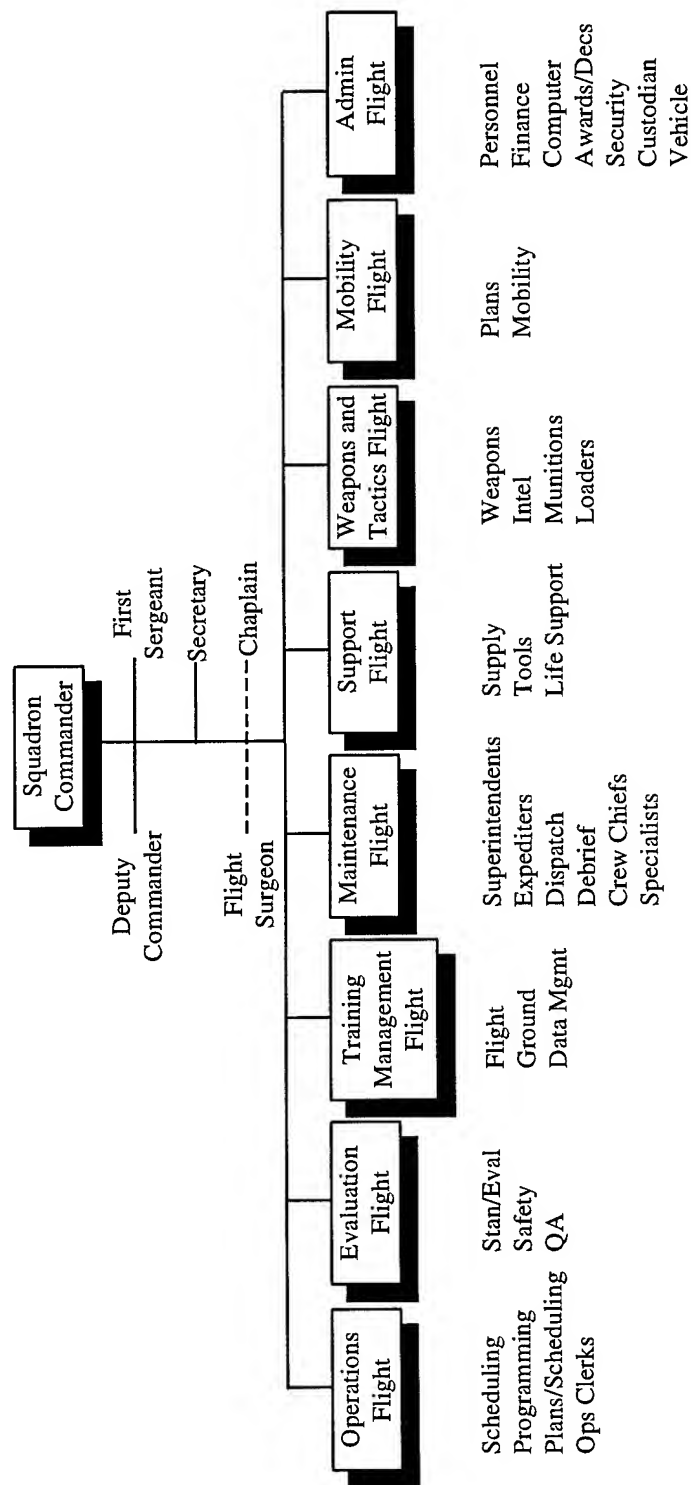
Figure 9. The Functionally Integrated Objective Squadron

Flight size would vary. Majors would command the largest flights such as maintenance, operations, and evaluations, while captains would command flights with fewer personnel or more narrow responsibilities such as training management or plans and mobility. All flights would include both officers and enlisted personnel, and include a flight chief or senior NCO to assist and advise the flight commander. Flights break down further into functional elements supervised by junior officers or senior NCOs, but everyone in the flight ultimately works for the flight commander, and all of the flight commanders work directly for the squadron commander. Further examination of the processes owned by each flight would determine appropriate officer and enlisted roles, but a fundamental characteristic of the organization is that rated officers work cooperatively with and supervise enlisted personnel much earlier in their careers.

From the flying perspective, the flight commander remains the primary instructor and flight leader for the rated officers in his flight, but other systems of scheduling rated officers can function in parallel with the new organization as effectively as they do in current squadrons. Scheduling could incorporate hard or soft crews, fly specific 2-ships or 4-ships together, or mix and match aircrew members as desired by the flight commanders.[8] Mission scheduling loses no flexibility in the integrated objective squadron.

The integrated objective squadron flattens and widens the organizational structure and eliminates the intermediate operations/maintenance officer layer of management. To partially compensate for this, the commander has a bona fide deputy commander who would also be a lieutenant colonel. The deputy commander position would be a required stepping stone and a training position for squadron command. Currently, the operations

officer serves as a de facto deputy commander in the absence of the commander, but this arrangement poses problems since the operations officer already has extensive responsibilities which suffer as he fills in for the commander.

Some flight command billets have specific specialty code requirements, while others would be open to any officer. A bomber or mobility squadron may adopt most of the same flights depicted in figure 9, but create other flights which are more relevant to their mission. The structure is very flexible, but would be standard within specific weapons systems. Squadrons with large numbers of rated officers due to crew size would have dedicated crew flights. These flights could serve as a training ground for the newest members of the squadron or for officers pursuing upgrade programs who would benefit from decreased additional responsibilities. After achieving the desired level of proficiency or completing an upgrade, officers would be reassigned to functional flights and assume additional duties or supervisory responsibilities.

Typical career progression in the integrated squadron would be identical for all assigned officers with one exception. Additional duties and supervisory responsibilities for rated officers are tied to weapons system proficiency, and maintenance officers would also have assignments to logistics group squadrons.[9] Beyond this exception, officers in the integrated squadron have three functional levels. The most junior officers have primarily technical responsibilities. Mid-level officers have a mix of basic supervisory and technical responsibilities at the element level. Senior captains and majors have supervisory responsibilities as flight commanders. At each level, officers will move laterally between two or three flights to gain broad functional experience.

Origin of the Functionally Integrated Objective Squadron. This organizational concept has its roots as a solution to the objective squadron paradox, namely, combat deployable units like the objective squadron and believe it improves mission effectiveness, yet commanders feel ill prepared to lead the objective squadron. The success of individually integrated functional areas such as safety, scheduling, and training, and the discovery that such integration resonates with the five themes of the 1991 reorganization (discussed below), led to the expansion of the idea across the entire squadron. During the research leadership forums, the group found similar organizational structures in British Royal Air Force, US Marine Corps, and US Navy flying squadrons which further refined the idea. The Marine Corps and Navy versions of the objective squadron also function identically whether at home base or deployed, provide abundant leadership development opportunities, and successfully withstand routinely high operations tempos. The integrated objective squadron proposed here better suits Air Force functional priorities.

Basic Pros and Cons

The current objective squadron concentrates a great deal of supervisory responsibility in very few officers. General McPeak commented that the objective squadron would fix a lopsided officer to enlisted ratio by moving more enlisted personnel into the operations group and flying squadrons.[10] Unfortunately, the maintenance stovepipe continues to exist under the squadron commander, where three officers still supervise upwards of 300 enlisted personnel. The integrated squadron distributes supervisory responsibility among many more officers, providing both better supervision and better leadership development

and creating a large pool of proven flight commanders from which to select squadron commanders.

Officers raised in the integrated squadron will develop more practical experience and the command skills they will need to lead the entire squadron. They will be able to balance the sometimes conflicting demands of operations and maintenance because they will have worked in and commanded flights incorporating both responsibilities. They will have practical experience leading enlisted personnel and working effectively with senior NCOs. The commander will be familiar enough with various officer specialty codes to competently advise them.

There are some concerns regarding the integrated objective squadron. The first concern is that flying duties will not permit rated officers to supervise effectively. While the flight commanders will fly as much as anyone else, every flight has several officers and a complement of NCOs to ensure smooth operations. The flying schedule threatens none of the three leadership behaviors discussed in chapter four: vision, team building, and motivation.

A second concern is that the integrated squadron will move technical duties performed by officers to the enlisted ranks. There are a number of technical duties in operations that can be performed, and probably should be performed, by enlisted personnel rather than by officers. The net gain comes in better leadership that truly permits the squadron to work smarter, not harder. While some responsibilities may shift, many others will be simultaneously eliminated, consolidated, or streamlined.

A third concern is the threat formal supervisory duties pose to the flying proficiency of rated supervisors. The key to avoiding this problem lies in selecting officers as flight

commanders only after they are firmly established (preferably as instructors) in the

weapons system.

Leadership Development Assessment

The Five Themes of the 1991 Reorganization. General McPeak outlined five

restructuring themes in 1991.[11] The integrated objective squadron satisfies the intent of

all of them.

1. Strengthen chain of command. Everyone in the integrated objective squadron works for a flight commander, and all of the flight commanders work for the squadron commander.[12] There are no intermediate, noncommand layers of management.
2. Consolidate where practical. Despite differing applications, the integrated objective squadron consolidates similar functional areas and their personnel under a single flight commander who is responsible and accountable for that squadron function.
3. Decentralize. Functional execution moves away from the operations officer, squadron maintenance officer, and commander towards functional flight teams. The commander has responsibility for the squadron, but his role emphasizes leadership rather than execution.
4. Streamline, delayer, flatten. The integrated squadron eliminates the two-person layer of management represented by the operations officer and maintenance officer. There are more functional flights (a flatter organization) with refined duties.
5. Clarify functional responsibilities. Squadron functions apply to the whole squadron, not to operations and maintenance separately. Combining similar functions provides the potential for greater efficiency. "Operations" and "maintenance" lose much of their meaning as functional definitions.

The integrated objective squadron finishes General McPeak's 1991 restructure by

extending the objective squadron themes down to the newest airman and second

lieutenant.

Applied Leadership Model. The integrated objective squadron provides important

maintenance and enlisted knowledge through practical experience, thereby strengthening

an officer's matrix of leadership traits. As an officer moves up in rank and responsibility

in the integrated objective squadron, he never experiences a large discontinuity in knowledge or leadership requirements. The combination of a broad background and gradual expansion of responsibility avoids a high-risk leadership transfer during which a new squadron commander must lead in a new setting without the support of a strong matrix of leadership traits. There are a number of benefits to this approach:

1. Squadron command is no longer a "test." Past performance will be truly indicative of future potential.
2. The incidence and duration of cases 1 and 2 (noneffective) commanders should substantially decrease.
3. The OJT period after the change of command, though not eliminated entirely, will be significantly shorter.
4. The Air Force will accrue the benefits of well-prepared leaders both in flying squadrons and higher echelon commands.

Survey Results. Chapter five presented major findings in four areas with numerous supporting points in each. The integrated squadron addresses all of these areas.

The objective squadron created a more mission capable and deployable squadron through better teamwork and communications, centralized control of sortie production and mission execution, and improved maintenance responsiveness. The functionally integrated squadron builds on this success by moving the teamwork and communications from an informal arrangement at the top of the squadron to a formal organizational arrangement that pervades the squadron. The integrated squadron further aligns functional areas by breaking down the operations and maintenance stovepipes.

The objective squadron caused problems in maintenance effectiveness and supervision. Squadron maintenance lost the support system formerly represented by the DCM and the DCM staff. Additionally, maintenance career paths became disrupted

because their functional area manager was not in the operations group, and they lost squadron command billets.

The integrated squadron improves the maintenance situation in several ways. The support system would gradually improve because the rated officers in the integrated squadron would have a much better comprehension of maintenance processes. Though a temporary maintenance advisor would be helpful to the operations group in the short run, the problem would gradually fade as the first group of officers raised in the integrated squadron achieve squadron command and operations group command.[13] Due to nearly identical rated and non-rated career paths, the support system would improve over several years, enabling rated officers to counsel non-rated officers and vice versa. The integrated squadron promotes officership first and career specialty second.

The integrated objective squadron solves leadership preparation problems for squadron command by institutionalizing an organization that provides relevant knowledge and experience. Leadership preparation is no longer a function of osmosis or random experiences that provide a greater or lesser degree of preparation purely by chance. Commanders will not have to search outside the squadron for leadership development opportunities. Conversely, the squadron becomes the primary training ground for future commanders by integrating functional responsibilities, supervision, and flying requirements throughout the organization.

Incorporation of Other Recommendations. The integrated objective squadron incorporates the benefits, if not the substance, of most of the other recommendations in this chapter and chapter six. The integrated squadron facilitates broad leadership development at all levels in the squadron. Education and training will take on an entirely

different and more advanced leadership perspective due to the greater leadership experience an officer at intermediate service school will already possess. ACSC and the squadron commander and senior leader maintenance courses will have the flexibility to focus on the specific demands and most current challenges of squadron command.

In the area of career paths and command tenure, the integrated objective squadron answers several but not all issues. The command career path inherent in the integrated squadron is a superior alternative to the other recommended approaches. The deputy commander position replaces the operations officer as the position of choice for officers arriving from nonflying staff or school assignments to regain proficiency in the aircraft and learn the mission. The other recommendations concerning command notification, late changes of weapons system, and command tenure still require Air Force implementation well above the squadron level.

Recommendation 4: Develop Air Force Leadership Doctrine

As this research progressed into greater depth regarding leadership development, it became clear that the nature of the questions posed by the group fell within the domain of doctrine. This awareness led to a literature search for US Air Force leadership doctrine. There are a number of Air Force pamphlets and short publications on the subject of leadership, but the search for doctrine ultimately led to an April 1995 Air War College research report entitled, "What Is and Where Is The United States Air Force Leadership Doctrine?" The author, Lt Col David J. Bertholf, documents the absence of US Air Force leadership doctrine and contrasts Air Force leadership publications with US Army publications.

As Lt Col Bertholf describes, the differences in quantity and quality are striking. The Air Force has little concrete guidance on leadership and no guidance on leadership development. What exists is very general in nature and differs little from the basics available in any entry level leadership text. Conversely, the Army has several comprehensive manuals and pamphlets on all aspects of leadership, leadership behaviors, and leadership development.[14] To illustrate the magnitude of the difference, five years before the Air War College paper cited above was written, US Army Lt Col Alan Fox wrote "Joint Leadership Doctrine for the Strategic Leader" as his individual study project at the US Army War College. In this paper, Lt Col Fox summarized the echelons of Army leadership and the applicable doctrine in a diagram similar to figure 10. The thesis of his paper was that the Army's leadership development doctrine and process is robust and logical in all of the echelons depicted, but it is missing a joint leadership component which is extremely important to properly preparing general officers for unified command. There was a small but important component missing in the Army's leadership doctrine in 1990, while in 1996 the Air Force still has no published leadership doctrine.
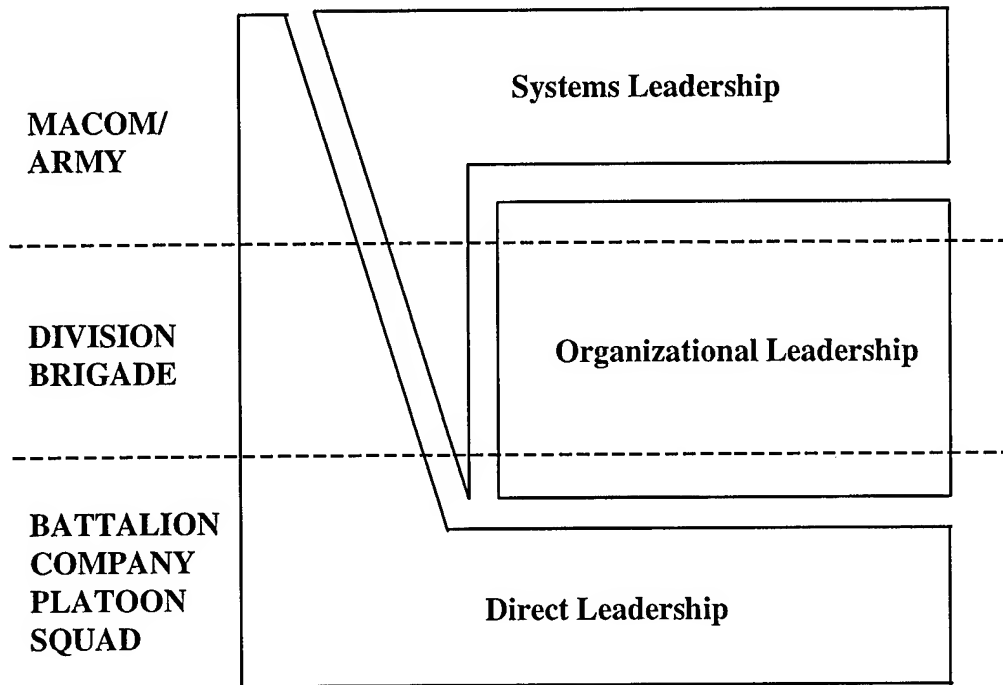
Figure 10. Echelons of US Army Leadership Doctrine

The reader may interpret the absence of leadership doctrine in two ways. One possibility is that the Air Force knows what it wants, knows how to get it, and has successfully institutionalized the process, but has simply never written the doctrine. The other possibility is that the Air Force does not know what it wants or how to develop it, has institutionalized processes which may not be serving it very well, and cannot find out because there is no command assessment process. In this second case, the absence of written doctrine is a symptom of the problem, not an oversight. The Air Force's current status does not coincide perfectly with one case or the other, but this research indicates that it is closer to the latter.

What should Air Force leadership doctrine say? In a general sense, military doctrine answers three questions:[15]

1. What is "it?" Doctrine defines roles and missions.
2. How is "it" used? Doctrine defines the who, when, where, why, and how regarding the role or mission.
3. How is "it" developed? What are the resources and processes (education and training) by which one acquires the capability to perform the roles described by the doctrine?

What is Air Force leadership? Effective Air Force leadership certainly depends on the same innate and developmental traits found in the leaders of other military services or even civilian corporations. However, there are important aspects of Air Force leadership that are uniquely Air Force, and do not apply to the US Army, US Navy, or AT&T. These unique aspects vary according to the level of leadership, much like the Army's echelons described above. Leadership doctrine must identify and describe Air Force–unique leadership qualities in addition to the broadly understood qualities of leadership.

How is Air Force leadership used? Leadership doctrine must define the leadership behavior expected from officers at all levels of the organization from second lieutenant to unified commander. It must also define leadership demands across the full spectrum of operations, and include staff, academic, and peer situations.

Lastly, how does the Air Force develop leadership? This part of the doctrine must address both general and Air Force–unique leadership traits, and include the innate and developmental aspects of both. The doctrine must outline how the Air Force prepares leaders at all levels for the roles they must fulfill, specifically identifying the responsibilities of individuals, superiors, peers, and the organization, as well as formal education programs. The doctrine should also specify how the Air Force assesses leadership preparation, selects commanders, and evaluates command effectiveness. In a nutshell, how does the Air Force institutionalize leadership excellence?

This research did not set out to write leadership doctrine, but the inquiry into Air Force leadership development suggested the initial direction described above. As Lt Col Bertholf concluded in his paper,

> Continuing to tiptoe around the responsibility to publish hard-hitting leadership doctrine and getting it internalized in the Service's future leaders is, to use General Lorber's words, "something we are doing wrong that needs to be corrected." We need to develop, publish, distribute, teach, and practice leadership doctrine.[16]

Summary

This chapter described four institutional recommendations which support sound leadership development in the objective squadron. Improved education and training, and better management of command career paths and tenure can improve specific problems, but the functionally integrated objective squadron has potential to institutionalize leadership development from the top to the bottom of the squadron. In any event, the process of writing Air Force leadership doctrine will demand answers to exactly how the Air Force develops it leaders.

Notes

[1] Lt Col Gary D. Sheets, "A History of Wing-Base Organization and Considerations for Change," Research report no. 474 (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1978), 1.

[2] Air Command and Staff College, "Leadership and Command Course Curriculum," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: August 1995).

[3] John A. Kline, "Communications for the Leader," in AU-24, *Concepts for Air Force Leadership*, Richard I. Lester and A. Glenn Morton, eds. (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University, 1990), 261. See also Col Donald E. Waddell, III, "A Situational Leadership Model for Military Leaders," *Airpower Journal* 8, no. 3, (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University, Fall 1994), 34.

[4] See Lt Col Milo P. Andersen, "What and How Can the Air Command and Staff School Contribute to the Development of Leadership," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air Com-

Notes

mand and Staff School, 1948), 19. See also the catalog of leadership development materials from the Center for Creative Leadership, One Leadership Place, P.O. Box 26300, Greensboro, N.C. 27438-6300. Another ACSC academic year 1996 research project entitled "Teaching Leadership" provides further guidance.

[5] Based on an informal survey of recent graduates from formal flying training across several weapons systems. Several weapons systems incorporate some form of maintenance indoctrination during instructor and flight examiner syllabi.

[6] Craig J. Catoni, *Corporate Dandelions*, (New York: American Management Association, 1993), 125. See also Lt Col Alan A. Fox, "Joint Leadership Doctrine for the Strategic Leader," (Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: US Army War College, 1990), 34, and John W. Gardner, *On Leadership*, (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 172.

[7] Gen Viccellio emphasized the importance of processes and output as keys to the 1991 restructure during the 1991 Corona South conference.

[8] In hard crew scheduling, the same pilot, co-pilot, and offensive and defensive weapons officers, (or other appropriate crew personnel) consistently fly together. In soft crew scheduling, any pilot, copilot, or other crew personnel may fly together on an as available or as required basis. In a single-seat squadron, hard crews are the equivalent of flying the same 2- or 4-ship together consistently.

[9] Maintenance officers are now career logistics officers and will be expected to serve in other logistics career fields as company grade officers.

[10] Gen Merrill A. McPeak, *Selected Works 1990–1994*, (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1995), 105.

[11] "Air Force Restructure," White Paper, September 1991.

[12] See also Lt Col Walter L. Burns, "The Objective Wing: A Critical Analysis," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1995), 34. Lt Col Burns' recommends "the Air Force as a whole to embrace the concept of everyone working for a flight commander. Large flights could sub-divide into mission elements under the supervision of an element chief, but the first officer in the chain of command is the flight commander."

[13] See the ACC proposal for an operations group deputy commander for maintenance in chapter two, The Objective Wing Since 1992.

[14] Lt Col David J. Bertholf, "What Is and Where Is The United States Air Force Leadership Doctrine?" (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1995), 26–34.

[15] AFM 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, vol 1, follows this approximate format.

[16] Bertholf, 38. As of March 1996, the Air Force Doctrine Center at Langley AFB, Va., did not have a tasking to develop Air Force leadership doctrine (telephone inquiry by Maj David Gerber).

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The Costs of Leadership Development

Leadership development has a cost, and it is a cost every organization must bear. When high operations tempos challenge a squadron's ability to accomplish the basic mission, training is put on hold, while leadership development gets ignored. After all, training and leadership development consume time and resources that could otherwise be used to accomplish the mission. In the post–Cold War environment of drawdowns and high operations tempos, it is easy to be consumed by the mission. Given even a small relaxation in the pace of operations, most units try to catch up on all of the training that was postponed during operational deployments. How can leadership development hope to compete with such extreme demands if it is not institutionalized in our squadrons?

Institutionalizing the recommendations in chapters six and seven would certainly involve overcoming a threshold during the transition period. The effort required to begin the transition, train supervisors, learn new skills, and overcome the initial OJT period at all levels may seem to overshadow the expected benefits until everyone learns their new roles and expectations. However, the Air Force must sacrifice in the short term for better leadership in the long term.

Conclusion

In 1991, the Air Force reorganized its flying squadrons under the objective wing concept, an organization very similar to the one the Air Force used during its first 10 years of existence. During the Cold War, when nuclear deterrence dominated our national strategy, the Air Force slowly evolved away from squadron and wing structures optimized to support deployed combat flying operations toward structures optimized for home base logistical efficiency. The single exception to this trend was Tactical Air Command's organization during the Vietnam conflict, a deployed combat operation. As the Cold War ended and the ensuing drawdown changed the Air Force's emphasis from forward basing to expeditionary operations,[1] the objective structure returns the organizational imperative to deployed combat operational effectiveness.

This research verified that the objective structure has improved the combat effectiveness of Air Force squadrons through improved teamwork and communications during sortie production and execution. The paradoxical aspect of the reorganization, also verified by this research, is that such operational improvements have occurred despite the fact that a majority of squadron commanders feel unprepared to lead the objective squadron. The benefits of better teamwork have apparently overshadowed the penalties of weakened leadership.

In order to understand how the objective squadron structure impacts the preparedness of commanders to lead, the applied leadership model demonstrated how a matrix of innate and developmental leadership traits supports three primary leadership behaviors: vision, team building, and motivation. The education and experience of a majority of squadron commanders has not provided them with two key developmental traits:

knowledge of maintenance processes and experience leading enlisted personnel. As a result, the matrix of leadership traits is weak and does not support the leadership behaviors. Applying commander leadership behaviors to the context of the squadron maintenance effectiveness leads to four resultant command outcomes, and only two reflect effective leadership.

The solution to the objective squadron paradox is not to revert to the previous structure. Such a move would leave today's smaller Air Force ill prepared to execute the nearly continuous expeditionary operations that have dominated and strained combat deployable squadrons since the end of Desert Storm. The solution lies instead in better leadership development for squadron commanders.

There is no short-term way to improve Air Force leadership development. On the contrary, improving leadership development will require long-term commitment to implement the recommendations developed by this research.

Every officer must train his subordinates to be leaders. Enhanced mentoring, judicious assignment of additional duties and special tasks, and informal linkages to maintenance personnel provide the correct context for pertinent leadership development. These solutions are immediately available to every officer.

Institutional solutions result in more permanent improvements which are less personality dependent. Refining formal education and defining career paths and command tenures address specific aspects of the leadership development process. The overall key, however, may lie in pushing the objective squadron concept past the commander down to every officer and airman in the squadron. Integrating the objective squadron along functional lines has the potential to streamline squadron operations,

improve mission accomplishment, and produce superior leaders simultaneously. Flying squadrons in other military organizations worldwide use variants of an integrated objective squadron, and Air Force squadrons have also used such concepts successfully on a limited basis. Institutionalizing the integrated objective squadron will finish the Air Force reorganization begun in 1991.

Finally, the Air Force must take control of its leadership development process by writing and using leadership doctrine. The results of this research indicate a distinct absence of institutional continuity in the development, selection, and assessment of Air Force leaders. Clearly defining Air Force leadership roles and development will promote the consistency and unity of effort which has been missing. Combine leadership doctrine with a functionally integrated objective squadron full of personnel who mentor their subordinates, and it will not take long for all commanders to be *spectacular*.

Notes

[1] Gen Merrill A. McPeak, *Selected Works 1990–1994*, (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1995), 69.

Appendix A

Objective Wing/Squadron Research Questionnaire

This questionnaire identifies benefits, problems, and possible solutions for the objective wing/squadron structure from the perspective of CAF squadron commanders and maintenance officers. Responses are strictly **confidential**.

CAF squadron background: Commander, maintenance officer, or other. (specify)

1. Has the reorganization made your squadron more mission capable? Why or why not?
2. Has the reorganization enhanced the working relationship between maintenance and operations? Why or why not?
3. Has maintenance effectiveness been hindered or enhanced by the reorganization? Why?
4. The logistics group commander is currently the functional manager for maintenance officers. Should the operations group commander assume that role? Why or why not?
5. Have maintenance officer career paths been hindered or enhanced by the reorganization? Why?
6. (CC only) Do you feel the Air Force adequately prepared you for your role as squadron commander? Please explain.
7. (CC only) What is or was your most difficult part of being a squadron commander?
8. (CC only, if applicable) Are you able to realistically maintain "mission ready" flying status while fulfilling the duties of squadron commander? If not, why?
9. Does the Air Force do a good job developing leaders? Why or why not?
10. Do you believe the operational flying squadron *should* be realigned to give rated officers maintenance experience earlier in their careers?
11. Are line aircrew members Air Force officers first or flyers first?
12. Does the current squadron structure support your answer to question number 11? Why?
13. (CC only) Is squadron leadership on the ground as important as "in flight" leadership and flying ability? Why or why not?
14. (CC only) What training was most useful to you in your squadron commander role?

15. (CC only) How could the Air Force have better prepared you for the role of squadron commander?
16. Who fills in for you while you are TDY or on leave?
17. Is there a need for a deputy squadron commander?
18. How could the objective wing/squadron be changed to work better?

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107

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